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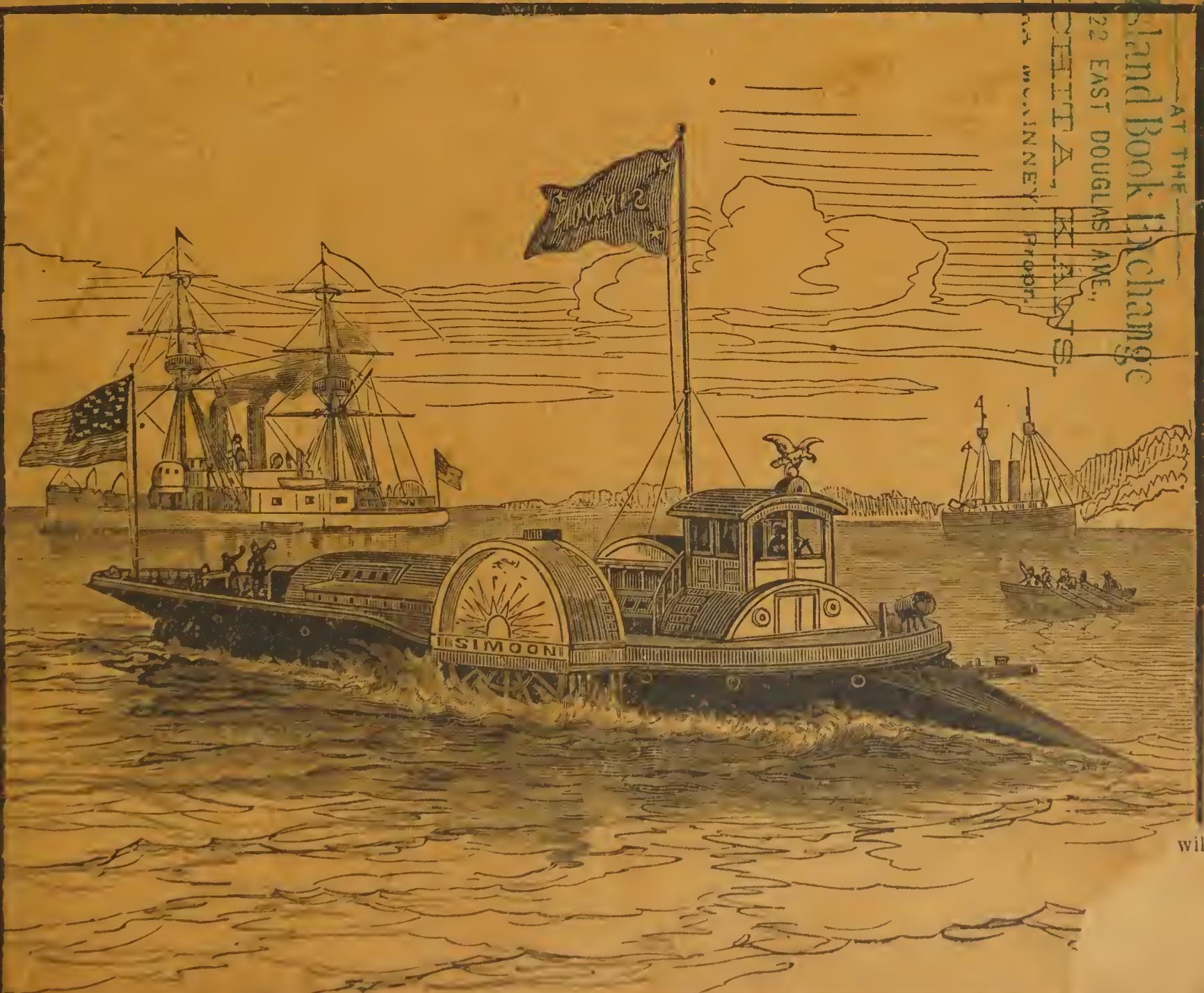
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PRICE 5 CENTS.

Jack Wright and His Electric Side-Wheel Boat;
OR,
FIGHTING THE BRIGANDS OF THE CORAL ISLES.

By "NONAME."



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Jack Wright and His Electric Side-Wheel Boat; OR, FIGHTING THE BRIGANDS OF THE CORAL ISLES.

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Jack Wright and His Electric Sea Launch," "Jack Wright and His Electric Gunboat," etc.

CHAPTER I.

BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE.

A FEW years ago the ship owners of the United States and other countries, whose vessels sailed the Indian Ocean, were startled to learn that a dangerous gang of brigands infested the coral isles of the Maldivian group.

Many vessels had been captured by the miscreants, their cargoes were confiscated, their crews and passengers were attacked, dreadful battles were waged, and while some of the unfortunates were put to death, others were held for heavy ransoms.

In order to put a stop to these atrocities, the ship owners' association of New York finally petitioned the government to send a gunboat to the rescue of the brigands' prisoners, and to break up the band of outlaws.

As the American navy was deficient of war ships, and nothing could be done at once, the ship-owners held a meeting and resolved to fit out an expedition by private subscription to suppress the brigands and gain the relief sought for.

Procuring authority to take such action on a legal basis, the association next cast about to find a suitable vessel for their purpose, when it was proposed to get the assistance of a young inventor of under-water boats, whose vessels were peculiarly adapted to that kind of work.

Accordingly, a committee was appointed to negotiate with this inventor, and the three gentlemen set out to make arrangements with him.

His name was Jack Wright, and he resided in a pretty fisher village on the Atlantic coast, named Wrightstown, in honor of his father, who had been the first man to successfully devise submarine navigation before he passed away.

The youth was then the most celebrated inventor of the century, for he had contrived some of the most wonderful marvels that mankind ever produced, in the uses of hydraulics, electricity, magnetism, galvanism, arms, armor, and explosives.

Jack Wright had no relatives but a young and beautiful wife, and resided in a magnificent house on the suburbs of the village, his gardens running back to a creek that came from the bay, at the head of which the village nestled.

Upon the bank of this stream stood a fine brick workshop, in which his inventions were constructed.

The youth was then less than twenty-two years of age, a tall, athletic fellow, of fine proportions, with angular features, dark eyes and hair, a faint, dark mustache just growing, and a highly courageous disposition, combined with a good education and a happy, generous temperament, which won him a host of friends.

Improving upon the first principles laid down by his father, who had been a retired seafaring man, Jack Wright developed a most extraordinary faculty for building under-water boats, and by the use of these vessels he had gath-

ered a large fortune from beneath the sea, with the assistance of two of his friends.

These companions of all his voyages were an old messmate of his father in the navy, named Tim Topstay, and a fat Dutch youth, called Fritz Schneider, whom Jack had once picked up in the village, utterly destitute, and anxious to find employment at his profession as an electrician.

They both resided with Jack, sharing his fortunes and his misfortunes, as they were greatly devoted to him in every manner.

Each of them owned a pet—the sailor's, a monkey named Whiskers, and the fat boy's, a paorot, called Bismarck—which they had picked up in Africa, on their first trip with Jack.

At the time the ship owners had decided to gain the co-operation of the young inventor, he was in the act of building a new boat to be operated by electricity, of the side-wheel pattern.

Having plenty time and money to gratify his talent, Jack's object in constructing this marvel of the deep, was to try to overcome the excessive rolling of side-wheel ships, by the application of an invention of his own to the craft, to keep her on a level keel in the heaviest seaway.

His model met all his expectations, and upon the pleasant September evening when the committee of shipowners arrived in Wrightstown, he had his singular boat nearly completed.

As the shadows of twilight fell upon the earth, the young inventor left the flooded room of his workshop, on the ground floor, which communicated with the creek, and ascended the stairs to his laboratory, in which Tim and Fritz were.

There he found the old sailor and the Dutch boy deeply engaged in a most wonderful electrical experiment.

Fritz was a short, big-bellied fellow, in a native Dutch costume, his head covered by a mop of flaxen hair, his face round and fat, and his disposition exceedingly pugnacious.

He was an expert electrician, a good cook, and an accordion player.

Tim, on the other hand, was clad in a sailor's suit, his rugged face was adorned with sandy whiskers, and he had a glass eye and a wooden leg, resulting from having served in the war on board of the frigate Wabash.

The ancient mariner was a terrible liar about his own prowess, a plug tobacco fiend, and yet withal a good navigator and true friend.

Both glanced up at Jack when he made his appearance, scared look upon their faces, and the youth now observed that they held Tim's little red monkey in their hands, to all appearances dead, to which they were applying an electric current.

"Well, boys, what are you doing now?" queried Jack curiously.

"Ach, mein Gott!" replied Fritz. "Dim's mongey vas det."

"Ay, ay," said the old sailor moarnfully. "Whiskers is choked ter death, my lad. Ther lubber has hung hisself!"

"Why, how was that?" asked Jack in anxious surprise.

"Yer see," replied Tim, "he an' Fritz's parrot wuz havin' a fight. Thar wuz a cord, wi' one end tied to a nail on ther wall, an' a slip noose in the other end. Bismark wuz achasin' ther monkey, an' he sprung fer ther cord to escape, got his neck in ther halter, an' committed suicide."

"What are you applying that electric current to him for?"

"Because I vos hear dot elecdricity somedimes could re-vive det animals."

"In cases of suffocation, a galvanic current will bring a rabbit back to life after half an hour of suspended animation," said Jack, "and there are instances on record, of men who have been hung, being recalled to life the same way. You are not using the right kind of a battery. How long has the monkey been in this state?"

"Quarter o' a hour," replied Tim.

"Lay him down on that table and I'll examine him."

The old sailor complied, and Jack bent over the animal. He was as limp as a rag, and to all appearances was dead.

The young inventor felt as sorry as his companions to see the monkey in this state, for he was very fond of the mischievous, and intelligent little fellow.

Having made a careful examination of the body, Jack went over to a bench on which were arranged all sorts of electrical instruments, and hundreds of miscellaneous articles.

Procuring a lancet he made an incision in the monkey's body, and with the skill of a surgeon he laid bare the largest nerve and muscle in the monkey's anatomy.

This done he went over to a large, powerful galvanic battery, attached its two wires, and carried the ends to his patient.

Applying one pole of the battery to the exposed nerve, and the other to the muscle, he began to shock the monkey.

The current caused its body to spasmodically twitch, the head was violently shaken, and the limbs were convulsively drawn up.

A deathly stillness prevailed in the room, Tim and Fritz keenly watching Jack's experiment with intense interest.

Presently the monkey's face exhibited such horrible contortions as to startle the spectators, the trunk partially raised itself, the paws were violently agitated, the chest rose and fell, as though respiration had recommenced and all the vital processes were set in motion.

"This operation," said Jack, when the monkey was fully restored, "may seem almost incredible, but we have every reason to believe there is a close connection between a galvanic current and the nervous energy by which all the vital functions are maintained. It is to the discovery of this fact that we owe our knowledge of re-animating an almost asphyxiated body like this monkey's was."

"Shuminey Christmas!" gasped the astounded fat boy, as he watched the monkey move chattering across the floor. "Mit dot discoveries nopoly don't need to died some more."

"It isn't quite as wonderful as that," laughed Jack. "The experiment can only be made successful in cases of suspended animation. Where life has become totally extinct the galvanic current would be of no avail whatever. The monkey is all right now."

"Hey, Chappie, take a drop on yourself! Cracker—ho-ho-ho!" a sharp, shrill voice interposed, down at Jack's feet at that moment, and the young inventor burst out laughing.

It was Bismark, the big green parrot, who had caused the mischief, and having thus announced himself he made a snapping noise with his hooked beak and waddled across the floor.

"I recollect when I wuz aboard ther ole frigate Wabash in the navy," said Tim, taking a chew of plug and giving a kick at his pants, "a shell came along an' carried away our mainmast. A flyin' bit o' ther busted iron hit one o' my

messmates on ther figgerhead an' he dropped dead. Now I knowed as he wuzn't killed, an' I reckoned as I could bring him to. So wot did I do?"

"Cheese it!" interposed Fritz. "Vos dot vun ouf your yarns?"

"Ay, yer lubber, an' a true one," growled Tim. "As I wuz a-saying', I made up my mind ter bring my messmate aroun', so I calls up ther hull crew aroun' him, an' ses I: 'He's as dead as a door nail, my lads; heave him overboard!' They grabbed him. Talk about yer galvanic batteries! Lordy, yer'd oughter seen that lubber spring up an' run away! He'd been playin' possum ter keep out o' ther fight!"

And a hoarse chuckle escaped Tim at the supposod recollection.

But it was no recollection at all.

The old sailor had become such a confirmed liar, that he actually believed his own stories.

"Waal," proceeded Tim, observing that his friends did not laugh. "We all——"

But that was as far as he could go.

Fritz had picked up an old accordeon, upon which he was wont to play, and interrupted him by starting a doleful tune.

Now Tim disliked that instrument exceedingly, and Fritz knew it.

He never lost an opportunity of playing it to exasperate the old sailor.

"Avast thar!" the ancient mariner growled. "D'ye wanter kill that ere monkey agin, arter our trouble ter bring him to, yer swab!"

"Vos dat bick lie feenish yet, alretty?" demanded Fritz, playing away.

"I wuz jist agoin' ter add as——"

"Shiminetty, don't, for Heffin sake!"

"If yer don't stop that ere playin', I'll keel haul ye!"

For a moment it looked as if there was going to be war, but at this critical juncture one of Jack's workmen entered and said:

"There's three gents from New York in the office to see you, sir."

"Ah, yes! They must be the representatives of the association from whom I received a letter in regard to the use of one of my boats," said Jack. "Tell them I'll be down in a few moments."

The man nodded and withdrew.

"Vot men dey vos, Shack?" asked Fritz, lying down the accordeon.

"The letter said they were anxious to secure the use of one of my boats to fight the brigands of the coral isles, about which the newspapers have recently been saying so much."

"Gee whiz! Mebbe thar's a chance in this whereby ye kin make use o' yer new electric side-wheel boat, my hearty," eagerly said Tim.

"Let us go down and hear what they have to say," said Jack.

And followed by his two friends he went down stairs into the cozy office on the ground floor where he found his callers awaiting him.

CHAPTER II.

THE "SIMOON."

The three gentlemen from New York were all fine looking and wealthy ship owners, two of them being middle aged men with beards, and the third a man of about thirty.

It proved that the youngest one of the committee was the chairman, and he introduced himself as Robert Raymond, the son of one of the largest ship owners in New York.

He was tall, slim, and smooth faced, with brown hair, blue eyes and a Roman nose.

Having stated the object of their call, he added in earnest tones:

"I am actuated in trying to secure your co-operation for another reason beside that already stated, Mr. Wright. I will

explain. My father, for the benefit of his health, took a trip to Ceylon in one of his ships, called the Sea Sprite. This vessel was captured by the brigands, and my father was made a captive.

"The bandits, I am told, are under the leadership of a white man from this country, named Black Ben, who has served terms in prison for outlawry on the high seas. He holds my father for fifty thousand dollars ransom. If the money is not forthcoming, he assured me in a letter that he would certainly kill my father. To lend my aid in rescuing my parent, I intend to accompany the expedition. If my father is saved the ransom money will be paid to you, in addition to fifty thousand more offered by the ship owners for the breaking up of the brigand's gang."

"Under what authority could any one proceed against those rascals?" asked Jack. "Remember the Sultan of the Maldivine Islands pays a bounty to the governor of Ceylon, and therefore may have protection."

"We have already procured a Letter of Marque for you which would entitle your boat to the privileges of a privateersman."

"That would overcome the difficulty," said Jack; "but you direct your remarks individually to me. You must remember, gentlemen, that I merely build my boats to gratify my own pleasure, and not to let them out—"

"We are hasty," said Mr. Raymond. "We are so anxious to have you undertake this mission that the thought of your refusal has never entered our minds. Tell me, I beg, if you will do this for us?"

"I cannot give you a decided answer now, but assure you that I think very favorably of the project," replied Jack, "for I have almost completed building a boat, which would answer your purpose admirably. Should I undertake the task you propose, it would only require four men to run it."

"What! Only four to wage war on a gang of brigands that numbers hundreds of men?" exclaimed Raymond, in astonishment. "Why, sir, we reckoned on furnishing you with a crew of one hundred."

"The weapons my vessel carries, of which I am the inventor, are of a kind with which none in existence can compare for power."

"Really, this sounds most extraordinary."

"None the less it is true," said Jack, "there is but one pneumatic gun, and that carries an explosive projectile which has a muzzle velocity of five thousand feet per second, and a chamber pressure of twenty-eight tons. You may imagine the explosive force of the smokeless powder horrortite which I compounded, when I state that a charge of one pound of it is twenty times greater than as much of nitro-glycerine, gun-cotton, dynamite or any other high explosive."

"Marvelous!"

"Extraordinary!"

"Wonderful!"

Thus exclaimed the three gentlemen.

All were astonished at Jack's claims.

"The boat," continued the young inventor, "is in the next room. If you feel inclined to look I will show her to you."

"By all means!" replied Raymond, eagerly.

"Then follow me, gentlemen," said Jack, arising.

They passed through a door.

It led them into an enormous room, brilliantly illuminated by electric lights, the walls being pierced by numerous windows.

At the end two great doors opened into the creek, and permitted the influx of water into an enormous basin sunk in the middle of the room wherein Jack's new boat floated.

The reservoir was surmounted on three sides by a metal footpath, and there was a door leading from it out to the garden.

Exclamations of intense astonishment escaped the three visitors when they beheld the Sinoon, as the boat was named.

She was a side-wheel craft of peculiar shape, built entirely of imported aluminum, her hull tapering finely fore and aft, and broken by bull's-eyes and water valves at intervals.

A pneumatic gun muzzle projected from the stern, and in the bow there was a search-light of 75,000 candle power; her deck was covered with an oval-top deck-house, broken by windows, and having doors fore and aft, while on top of it forward was a wheel-house.

The main features of the boat were:

Length on the load-line	- - - - -	150 feet.
Extreme breadth	- - - - -	21 feet.
Mean draught	- - - - -	9 feet.
Displacement	- - - - -	1,329 tons.
Tons per inch	- - - - -	10.
Indicated horse power (equaled by electro-motive force)	- - - - -	10,000.
Speed in knots	- - - - -	38.

She had a balance type of rudder, a coffer-dam filled with cellulose was worked along in the wake of the water line, and her machinery somewhat resembled that of the type used in steamers having triple expansion, vertical inverted and direct acting engines with high pressure cylinders.

The collective electro motive force of the propelling wheels caused 328 revolutions per minute, operated by motors connected with dynamos that derived their energy from the oil-engine and storage batteries.

There was an electric lighting plant consisting of two engines and two dynamos so arranged that either dynamo could be connected with any or all of the incandescent or arc circuits.

The dynamos produced, with four hundred revolutions per minute, a constant electro-motive force of eighty volts, measured at the poles, while each dynamo had a capacity of two hundred ampere hours.

As many lamps, including those for running lights and signal purposes were furnished, arranged in sections, with the conductor for each section leading from the switchboard in the pilot-house.

She was provided with an electric fan in each room for ventilation, a double vertical single acting air-pump for the pneumatic gun and reservoirs, and a centrifugal water pump for operating her ballast chamber.

This much Jack explained to his guests, and he then led them on board to inspect her at their pleasure.

The first room in the deck-house was a combined cabin and stateroom, with stairs leading up into the pilot-house, while the following rooms were used for mess, kitchen, ship stores, diving suits and fire-arms, and the last one an empty room for exit under water.

A staircase from the cabin led down to the gun room, aft of which was a huge engine room, and back of it an apartment filled with storage batteries, as the engines were only used when on the surface.

The hold was divided into three compartments, the one in the midship section being used for storing air, and each end one for water.

As all the mechanical parts of the boat worked by electricity, the wires for controlling them were bunched and run up to the pilot-house, where they were controlled by switches and levers.

This pilot-house was furnished with various kinds of gauges and instruments, a wheel, compass, and lever-board.

Everything was compact, complete and perfect in detail.

Their operations will be detailed as we proceed.

Suffice it that the gentlemen who were inspecting the boat were delighted with her, for she was certainly a marvel.

"I cannot say too much in praise of this wonderful craft," enthusiastically remarked Robert Raymond, when they finally left the boat. "But are you sure, after all the enormous expense you must have gone to in building her, that she will operate?"

"Positive!" replied Jack, emphatically. "Her propulsive power is the same as I have tested in other boats. I am

therefore sure on that score, although I have never built a side-wheeler before. To be assured beforehand, however, I always make it a point to try my boats in Wrightstown Bay. I can thus gain a fair estimate of their capabilities before I use them for a long voyage."

"As it is our intention to remain in Wrightstown until you decide whether you will undertake the task we have arranged," said Raymond, "we will leave the papers in the case in your possession until you decide one way or the other. You may then study them over at your leisure."

And so saying he handed Jack an envelope.

The young inventor placed it in his pocket.

After some further conversation the gentlemen took their departure for the Sea Spider House in the village near the bay.

Jack and his companions then returned to the house, and having had their supper, they repaired to the boy's library and there examined the documents.

They consisted of the Letter of Marque, an explanation of the offenses committed by the brigands, and certain instructions regulating his actions in the matter.

Our three friends spent the entire evening studying the papers and discussing the details of such a trip as was wanted.

On the following day they returned to the workshop, and set to work at finishing the construction of the boat.

There was not much more to be done, but it occupied the entire day to complete their task.

By nightfall the boat was finished.

They then partook of their supper, and repairing to the library, they carefully went over the work that was laid out for them again and held a long conference.

In the midst of it the servant announced a caller.

It proved to be Robert Raymond.

"You have called at an opportune moment, sir," said Jack to him after the first salutations were over.

"In what way, may I ask?" was the eager query.

"We have finally reached a conclusion regarding your proposition."

"Ah! As I suspected. I called to ascertain. And your answer?"

"We accept your offer."

"Good!" exclaimed Raymond, delightedly.

"In one week from to-day we will start for the Indian Ocean in the Simoon, to fight the brigands of the coral isles."

"Mr. Wright, I am delighted to hear it."

"To-morrow morning we will give my new boat her maiden trip to try her ability. You and your companions are cordially invited to accompany us, and you can then see how the boat acts."

"Nothing would afford us greater pleasure, I assure you."

"Be on hand at my shop at nine o'clock, and we will be ready for you," said Jack.

Some further conversation ensued.

Then Raymond took his departure.

He was delighted at the young inventor's decision.

The following day dawned dark and stormy, but despite the inclement weather the three ship owners were punctually on hand, and embarked on the boat with our friends.

Jack then started the big paddle wheels revolving, and as the creek doors had been opened, the Simoon ran out of the shop and glided down to the bay, over which she sped fleetly to the opening in the headland through which she passed out to sea.

CHAPTER III.

A TEST TRIP.

The sky was overhung by heavy banks of dark, flying clouds from which torrents of rain were pouring down, and was blowing a gale, and there was a high sea running.

As the Simoon ran out into it, instead of rolling first one

ed steady on as level a keel as could be expected in such a rough sea.

When questioned about this peculiarity by the ship owners the young inventor laughed and said:

"Oh, that was the object for which this boat was built. The way it was effected was by setting the paddle wheels lower down toward the keel than is usually done in side wheelers, and then making an automatic balance to counteract the rolling by a peculiar distribution of her water-ballast. The theory was to make the weight of the ballast roll to the port side when the boat goes to the starboard, and vice versa."

"You have accomplished your design most famously," said Raymond, in critical tones. "By your method even the pitching is overcome to a degree that renders a boat of this kind incapable of making a person sea-sick. I can almost stand as steadily here as if I were on *terra firma*."

One of the ship owners here ventured the information that a vessel had once been constructed to overcome the sea motion by arranging the rooms in the hull on the principle of a compass.

The other gentleman then told of a cabin in another vessel which was built independent of the hull, and suspended from the underside of the deck to swing like a pendulum in the hold.

Jack steered his boat straight out to sea.

In front of him there was a row of indicating dials.

He glanced at the one controlled by the log, and saw that the boat made so little leeway in the rough waves that she made twelve knots an hour under half her electromotive force.

He then pulled the lever all the way over on the ratchet by which the power on the wheels was graduated, and the indicator soon showed twenty-five knots.

In clear weather then the boat certainly could make thirty-eight.

Turning a switch, the youth put on the glow of the search-light, and an enormous shaft of dazzling light flashed over the sea, capable of showing up objects at a distance of two miles.

All the incandescent lamps were blazing throughout the rooms, causing a mellow glow to surround the Simoon, the reflected glitter dancing upon the waves like fire-flies.

The electric fan-wheels were whirling noiselessly, cooling the air, and not a sound came from the machinery.

Upon the wall there was a short-distance telephone, and Jack turned a handle on the box, causing a bell to tinkle.

"Hello—hello! Vot's der medder?" came Fritz's voice from the box.

"Does the machinery work properly?" asked Jack.

"Fair; when id vos used some id work better."

"Do you see any mistakes in its construction?"

"Werry few. Still ve vos got to made some alterations."

"Have you got the engine on or the storage batteries?"

"Der gas enchine, und der pony motor vos work der lighds."

"Examine the cells and put out the engine flame."

"Vos yer goin' to transfer der bower from der engine to der baddery?"

"Yes, for I wish to go under the sea presently."

"All right."

Tim had been making a round of the boat closely watching everything about her to discover any errors in her construction.

He now went up into the pilot-house, and reported that everything was in perfect order as far as he could see.

"You may now close her up for a descent," said Jack, "I'm going to run her back to the bay under water."

"Ay, ay," said Tim, touching his forelock.

He then stumped away.

Jack then put the air-pump into connection with the big reservoir in the midship section, and started it to fill it with compressed atmosphere, after which he switched the power from the engine to the batteries.

"Do you mean to say that you are going to take us down under the sea?" asked Raymond.

"Exactly," replied Jack, with a nod.

"Can we exist there?"

"Easily. The midship reservoir will hold thousands' of cubic feet of air compressed into it—enough in fact to last four divers four days under the sea."

Just then Tim came in, and announced everything ready.

Jack then pulled a lever to start the influx of air, as the pump had filled the reservoir, and was stopped, after which another lever was moved, causing the valves to open, and let the sea water into the forward and after compartments below.

As the weight of the water became greater than the buoyancy of the confined air, the boat began to settle down into the sea.

She continued to sink thus until she was buried in a depth of fifty feet from the surface, registered on the depth-indicator.

Not the slightest inconvenience was now felt, for they could breathe the air they carried with them, and the violent motion imparted by the waves to the surface was no longer felt.

A dense gloom surrounded them through which the electric lights cast a misty glow, while the strength of the search-light became greatly diminished in brilliancy.

Jack stopped the influx of water.

The three strangers looked very uneasy.

They kept repeatedly asking the young inventor if he thought they were quite safe, and wished themselves safely upon the surface again, yet dared not say so for fear of showing any cowardice.

The boat rode evenly and steadily.

Jack kept the wheels revolving.

He now ascertained that he could only make twenty knots under the water, owing to the resistance offered by the shape of the hull.

"Can you keep her at any height or depth in the sea?" asked Raymond.

"Easy enough, by grading the amount of water I ship," replied Jack, as he turned the wheel.

"What is that dark object rising up from the bottom ahead?"

"A rock," said Jack, stopping the boat. "It will give me an opportunity of showing you how I can use my gun under the sea. Tim, hold the wheel till the gentlemen go below with me to see how the gun operates."

The old sailor grasped the spokes.

Following Jack, the committee went below.

Entering the gun-room, they saw the powerful weapon consisting of coils of pipe, arranged with a peculiar mechanism.

Close by it, there was a stand filled with cylindrical brass shells, resembling enormous cartridges.

Opening the breach of the gun, Jack shoved one of the projectiles into the tube, and closed it again.

He then turned a wheel to charge the air-chambers.

The muzzle of the gun was covered by an automatic shutter or valve, which kept out the water, only opening when the projectile knocked it, and closing water-tight as soon as it passed.

At that moment the boat was 2,000 feet from the rock, and advising the spectators to keep watch out the bull's-eyes in the bow, the youth sighted the piece.

He then pressed a button on the gun-carriage.

The air was released, the projectile was blown from the gun tube, and it shot through the brine, leaving a white, bubbling streak in its wake.

Straight as an arrow it plunged at the target of stone, and the moment it touched, it burst.

The shock was felt in the boat.

The spectators observed a strange scene.

A great ball of agitated water burst into a boiling mass of

foam at the point of the impact, through which scores of broken, flying rocks were seen.

The terrible agitation of the water did not subside until all the effects of the explosion wore away, and then it was seen that the massive rock was blown to pieces.

All of the upper portion was gone.

Exclamations of intense wonder escaped the spectators.

"Gentlemen, are you satisfied with the result of that shot?"

"Mr. Wright, it is marvelous!" gasped Raymond.

They commented upon it for some time, and then went up to the pilot house, where Jack started the boat on again.

Scores of fish were encountered of all sizes and kinds, and great masses of aquatic vegetation were seen floating and growing in the brine.

To show the accuracy with which he could steer the boat under water once he had his bearings, Jack drove the Simumon into Wrightstown bay, and did not fetch her to the surface until she had passed up the creek to the shop.

Upon stopping her in the basin her inmates went ashore, and passed into the young inventor's house.

There all the details of Jack's proposed journey in the Simumon were arranged, and the gentlemen left for New York.

This syndicate of war was now perfectly satisfied of the young inventor's ability of coping with the brigands of the coral isles, and the youth was satisfied to try the experiment.

The remuneration he would receive would amply repay him for his outlay to build the boat, and the dangerous adventures they were bound to encounter were exactly to his taste.

He explained the matter to his wife, and next day preparations for the journey were begun by rectifying the errors in the boat's construction and equipping her for the cruise.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARGED BY A SWORDFISH.

At the end of a week from the time Jack made the trial trip in his new submarine wonder everything was in readiness for the journey, and our friends embarked with Robert Raymond.

They took the monkey and parrot and Fritz's accordion with them, and favored by good weather started across the Atlantic.

People on passing vessels merely thought the Simumon was an ordinary side-wheel steamer bound for Europe.

A heading was made for the Mediterranean Sea across the north-bound current of the dark Gulf stream.

This wonderful stream is not the only ocean current, for there is a southward stream running under it, these sea-currents all resulting from the law that for each current or tide there must be a counter current.

As the Simumon passed through the straits of Gibraltar after an uneventful journey, Jack and Tim stood in the wheel-house, and the young inventor said:

"I've discovered that two fierce currents rush through these straits, the surface stream coming from the Atlantic going in, and an under current beneath going out with such speed that if a weight was dropped low enough to reach it, the current would tow a boat against this upper current."

"Such a tideway as that ere current wouldn't leave no wrecks ter litter ther bottoms hereabouts them," said Tim, reflectively.

"No," the youth assented. "This is a most wonderful sea. Perhaps submarine volcanoes abounding here have some effect upon it. In 1866, after a great rumbling and disturbance of the water, in the harbor of Santorini, near Rhodes, a small island arose from the sea, and upon it were two houses of solid masonry. It proved to be an island which had sunk twenty centuries ago, and was again forced up by volcanic action."

"That's queer," said the old sailor, as he glanced about. Then he suddenly started Jack by crying:

"Veer off! Veer off thar, my lad!"

"What's the trouble, Tim?" gasped Jack, changing the boat's course.

"Land ahead thar! Don't you see it?"

"So it is. But there ought be no shore here."

It did not seem to be more than half a mile away to the port that the youth observed a strange shore apparently suspended in a mysterious manner several degrees above the blue waters of the sea.

The Simoon raced away from it.

Jack glanced out again, and then uttered an exclamation of the most intense astonishment—a cry which Tim echoed.

The land had suddenly vanished.

Nothing but the calm sea remained.

"Lord save us—whar is it gone?" gasped the old sailor.

He rubbed his good eye and peered out, convinced that he was suffering from an optical illusion.

Then he glanced at Jack.

The youth now began to laugh.

"Refraction!" exclaimed Jack.

"Wot! Don't yer see it's gone?"

"Yes—it was only a mirage."

"Oh, gee! Is that so?"

"They are common in this sea."

No other incident occurred to disturb them.

The side-wheeler worked like a clock, and was steered for the Suez canal, which she finally reached.

Passing down into the Red Sea, she finally ran out into the Gulf of Aden.

Fritz, having got the electrical machinery in good working order, devoted himself a great deal to the culinary department of the boat, and gave great satisfaction as a cook.

Tim attended to the navigation.

Raymond proved to be a pleasant, plucky fellow.

His courage was put to the test when the Simoon was passing among the Greek isles on a calm night.

There was no longer the formidable pirates and buccaneers of the Spanish Main, but there are still the proas and ferocious Malays on the Straits of Sunda, and the pirates who haunt the caves of the Grecian Archipelago in large boats called trattas, propelled by long sweeps.

One of these boats shot out in front of the Simoon, and one of her dusky crew came aboard, pretending to be a pilot who understood enough about those waters to bring the electric boat away from the dangerous rocks into deep water, and Jack engaged him.

Instead of doing as he pretended, the rascal made an effort to drive the boat upon a sunken rock to wreck her, in order to give his companions a chance to rob her.

Raymond was the first to discover their danger.

He lost not a moment in seizing the treacherous pirate bodily, hurled him out the window of the wheel-house into the sea, and grasping the wheel, he turned the boat aside, just in time to save her.

It was on a beautiful, clear morning when the Simoon passed into the Arabian Sea, but the monsoon storms were then blowing.

The suddenness with which the gale arises at times is startling, and there was no indication of a storm save a peculiar redness in the sky, when suddenly the boat was overwhelmed by a fierce tempest.

Fritz and Raymond were on duty at the time, and they lost no time in submerging the boat.

She descended to a depth of one hundred feet, and there traveled along in comparative safety.

Jack and Tim were aroused and went up into the turret.

"I see you've got her submerged," said the young inventor.

"There was a fierce monsoon storm blowing up above," said Raymond, explanatory, "and profiting by the example you showed us during the trial trip, we submerged her to escape the rough weather."

"Have you taken our bearings, Tim?"

"Ay, ay, my lad, al' all's well!" replied the old sailor.

Jack took the wheel, and his three companions soon afterward passed down into the cabin.

The youth consulted the gauges, and then settled himself down to his duty by peering out of the thick plate glass windows.

Ahead the water was lit up by the search-light, and myriads of fishes were swimming about in the liquid depths, while a dozen or more feet below the keel the sandy bottom was in plain view.

It was overgrown with corals and singular marine plants, while through the water there floated the most singular forms of animal and vegetable life.

As Jack kept his glance ahead, he suddenly observed a large sword-fish come out of the gloom at one side.

It was a monster of its kind, and the huge, bony sword protruding from its snout was very long and stout.

These beasts are the most formidable foes of the whales, and it kept watching the boat with an ugly and very threatening look, which seemed to indicate that it looked upon the Simoon as an object of aversion.

Jack watched it.

The fish allowed the boat to pass.

It then came swimming along, swept by, and gaining a point some distance in advance, it suddenly paused, shot around athwart the Simoon's course and faced the boat.

"How strangely that creature is acting!" commented Jack, in surprise. "They are aggressive beasts and do not hesitate to attack anything that arouses their animosity. He will encounter a pretty tough customer if he tackles this boat!"

The Simoon was constructed to resist a cannon-ball, and the youth, therefore, had but little fear of the bony blade wielded by the fish doing her any damage.

But he little suspected what was about to happen.

For a few moments the fish confronted the boat.

Then it suddenly came flying at the Simoon with the speed of a thunderbolt.

Jack laughed softly.

He expected to see the creature's sword strike the hard aluminum plates of the boat and break to pieces.

Instead of that, however, the fish charged straight at the glass windows in front of the young inventor.

He saw his peril when too late.

The utmost he could do was to stop the boat.

Crash! came the fish's sword the next instant.

A jingling of glass followed.

One of the big panes had been broken to pieces.

Into the turret shot the sword and a portion of the head, but the weapon was snapped in two.

A stream of water gushed in around it.

Uttering an exlamation of alarm, Jack recoiled.

If the torrent of water gushing into the pilot-house continued, there was every prospect of the boat filling, killing our friends, and burying her a wreck at the bottom.

Jack realized the situation in a second.

Then he dashed over to the companionway which was fitted with a pair of water-tight trap-doors.

Down he went, closing the doors after him.

He was only just in time, for the water which flowed in through the broken pane was already pouring down into the cabin, and he shut out the influx.

Fortunately for him, he had stopped the boat, for she could not now be guided, as the pilot-house was bound to fill with the water.

Jack's companions were startled by the noise.

They went rushing toward him as he appeared with anxious faces and eager questions.

"What has happened?"

"Wot dot noises vos?"

"Water's acomin' in?"

In a few words Jack explained the cause of the trouble, and they all stared blankly at each other.

"Lord save us, can't none o' ther water git down at us,

Jack?"

"No, for the trap doors are perfectly water tight, Tim."

"How in the world are we to navigate the boat now?"

"Only by operating her from within the wheel-house."

"Did you couldt fixes dot proken vinder?"

"I hope so, Fritz—anyway I'm going to try."

The excess of weight brought to bear upon the bow by the additional water, caused the boat to sink lower at that end, and Jack left his companions.

Proceeding to the store-room, he examined the diving suits, and saw that they were all ready, save for filling the reservoirs with compressed air.

These suits were made like ordinary diving suits, except that instead of rubber cloth aluminum scales composed the dress.

On the backs were air reservoirs to contain enough atmosphere to last a diver several hours, the helmets had electric lamps on top, and on the back was a battery that worked the lamp.

Jack put on a suit, charged the reservoir, and passed into the end room of the boat, to go out on deck and repair the damage.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOUR SAILORS.

It was a rule of Jack's to carry duplicate parts of the boats he built, to be used in case of accident.

He therefore procured a plate of glass from the storeroom, and all the necessary tools to set it in as a substitute for the broken one.

Entering the water chamber, he closed the door and fastened up the visor of his helmet, after which he turned a thumb-screw in the suit which put the battery in connection with the helmet lamp and caused a glaring shaft of light to stream from it.

An automatic air-injector fed the atmosphere into the helmet, and a valve in the side let off the carbonic acid gas.

Having arranged his breathing apparatus, the young inventor next pulled a lever, which was fastened to the wall, and a valve was opened, admitting the sea water into the room.

Within a few moments the compartment was filled.

Jack then opened the sternmost door, and passed out on deck, where he saw that the boat had come to a pause.

His back, breast and shoe weights kept him down, and without feeling the heavy load, he strode along the deck up forward.

Passing between the deck-house and the port paddle-box he came to a ladder, up which he went to the railed upper deck.

He saw that the sword-fish had made its escape.

One of the panes of glass was broken to pieces and the wheel house was filled with water.

Jack now set to work at taking out the fragments of broken glass.

He then inserted the pane he had brought.

This done, he opened the door of the pilot-house, and entered.

There was no way of emptying the room of the water it contained down there, so the youth grasped the pump lever and pulled it over.

As soon as the pump began to empty the ballast out of reservoirs the boat began to ascend toward the surface.

She soon reached the top.

The storm was still raging.

As soon as she was on the surface, the water poured out of the pilot house, until it was emptied, and Jack closed the door.

He then opened the companionway trap.

Some water descended into the cabin, but so little that no damage was done to anything.

Jack's friends now came up, and he walked back to the water chamber aft, entered it, pulled the pump lever on the

wall, and emptying the chamber, he passed inside and divested himself of his suit.

He then rejoined his friends.

Tim had started the Sinoon ahead again.

"I see ye've fixed ther glass, my lad," he observed.

"There was no trouble about it. She works all right now don't she?"

"Ay, ay, but ther seas ain't werry stiddy."

"I can even remedy that," said the youth.

He turned one of the levers and then peered down at the bows.

The search-light showed several streams of oil spurting from the boat upon the troubled waters ahead.

It was astonishing how the oil spread and quelled the fury of the waves in the course of the boat.

It gave her a chance to proceed with more freedom.

In this manner she continued along the surface with no further accident, and the next day finally dawned.

All traces of the storm had disappeared.

As the sun arose Jack went out on the forward deck with his glass after breakfast and scanned the horizon.

Afar in the distance he made out a faint, dark object, and shouted up to Fritz, who was steering:

"Land ho! Land ho!"

"I don't see me noddings!" said the Dutch boy.

"No, but you will soon observe the trees."

"Vot you made dot ond, Shack?"

"According to my reckoning they must be the Laccadives or Maldives."

"Vot! Der coral isles?" asked Fritz, with a start.

"Exactly so," assented Jack, with an affirmative nod.

Jack kept his glance riveted upon them.

Within a few hours the boat had arrived so close to them that any doubts about them which may have lingered in the mind of the youth were at once banished.

Tim and Raymond had come out on deck before they came in sight, and joined the young inventor.

They were then so close to the Equator that the heat was stifling, causing all hands to don the thinnest of clothing.

"What a queer region!" exclaimed Raymond. "I never before saw such peculiar kinds of islands as they are."

"They certainly are one of the wonders of the world," said Jack. "I have heard that each of those chaplets are the nearly level summits of submarine mountains, rising abruptly from a depth of from twenty to forty-five fathoms. See how the margins of each isle is fringed and the central expanses studded with oval basins of coral rock that holds a lake of clear water in the center."

They all went up into the pilot-house.

There was a barrier reef around nearly all the isles, but most of them had broad, safe, navigable channels between them, ranging from one to two miles wide.

"Whereabouts is we located now, Jack?" asked the old sailor.

The youth figured a moment.

"About six degrees north of the equator," he replied, finally. "Hence we must be close to the Maldivian group. Now Raymond, which one of these isles is the rendezvous of the brigands?"

"The one named Ari," replied the young ship owner. "It lies to the south of Five Degree Channel, and southwest of Male, or King's Island. According to the account I received there are several hundred of the rascals there who are described as people professing Islam. They are men of a darkish copper color, short stature and poor physique, but having an oval contour of face with a pleasing expression and large bright eyes."

"The Sultan of the 12,000 Isles, and Lord of Land and Sea as he styles himself, lives on King's Island, I believe."

"Yes—and that island has a population of 2,000 people who are doubtless in sympathy with the brigands. The rascals have several native vessels of 80 to 200 tons burden which they use to carry out their nefarious work."

"Then we will have to change our course to the south.

ward. If I can get a crack at those vessels with my gun, I won't leave one of their timbers floating on the sea!"

"I reckerlect when I wuz in ther navy," began Tim.

Fritz saw his accordeon lying close at hand and picked it up.

Before the old sailor could spring his yarn on them, the fat boy began to play a lively tune, drowning out his voice.

Tim paused and glared at his grinning friend.

He essayed once or twice to speak, but it was of no use, as he could not hear his own voice.

Then he said something impolite and stumped down below.

Having got rid of the old fellow, the fat boy left the wheel in Jack's hands and went down on deck to let the parrot and monkey out of their cages in order to stir up a fight between them in the cabin.

The Simoon ran close to the island now.

It was the one named North Malosinadulu.

"There's a vessel beating this way now," said Jack to his companions presently, as he pointed to the eastward.

The vessel was a league away, a small boat in which they saw, by the use of a glass, several men.

Raymond studied it intently a moment and then exclaimed:

"The occupants are signaling to us, Wright."

"Is that so? I'll bear down upon them to learn what they want."

He changed the vessel's course, and soon reached a point near the craft, when, to their surprise, they observed that the occupants of the boat were four in number, and all white men.

They were frantically signaling to Jack, and he saw that their vessel was evidently sinking.

"Hello! They are white men—sailors—and evidently in trouble."

"So they are, but they've got a native boat, Wright."

"The old tub seems to be sinking."

"Ship ahoy!" came a hail just then.

"Ahoy!" replied Jack. "Run alongside."

"Save us!"

"We will pick you up!"

The felucca-like boat came up to the Simoon, and Tim and Fritz, having gone out on deck and seen what was transpiring, flung the men a rope.

Leaving the wheel in Raymond's hands Jack passed down below and joined his friends just as the strangers came aboard, and let the leaking, half-filled boat float away.

The youth saw that the sailors all wore rough, worn out clothing, three of them wore beards and the fourth had only a mustache.

"Saved! Saved!" they cried, in tones of delight.

"How came you in this trouble?" asked Jack, kindly.

"You see, sir," said the man with the mustache, "me and thny messmates here was some of the crew of the ship Indian Rajah what was wrecked on one of the coral islands. We

fell into the hands of the natives who made slaves of us, and escaping in yonder boat, we were beating about in hopes of meeting a ship to take us back to New York when we sighted you."

"Are there any of your messmates yet on the island?"

"Ten more of 'em, sir"

"Do you want me to save them?"

"Oh, if you only could!"

"Well, I am here to wage war on the brigands of these isles for the ship owners of New York, and if you will tell me upon which isle the captives are, I'll go there with you and try to save them."

A surprised look overswept the faces of the sailors.

They glanced quickly at each other, and then the man who had spoken assumed an eager look of delight and cried:

"Thank Heaven for that! The island is called Ari."

"Why, that's where the brigands live whom I have come to exterminate!"

"Yes, sir, I know it. And will you go there now?"

"We were heading for that isle when you stopped us."

"Good! We can then lend you our help!"

Jack questioned the man at some length and received very satisfactory answers about the brigands, for the sailor said he knew what all the weak points of their garrison were and could pilot our friends into the lagoon.

The boat was then headed for the southward under the Dutch boy's guidance, and the sailors were finally left to themselves.

A sardonic smile crossed the face of the man who had spoken to Jack when the youth left him, and he said to his friends:

"Our old ruse of ship-wrecked sailors has worked again, boys! I thought this craft was a prize, but I find it's an enemy. It's lucky we saw her and got aboard, for it gives us a chance to balk their designs against our gang. They little suspect who we are!"

Unfortunately for Jack and his companions they did not know that the man was the leader of the very gang they had come to suppress.

CHAPTER VI.

REVERSING THE TABLES.

It was the intention of Black Ben and his three companions to lure Jack and his friends into the hands of the brigands.

They hastily arranged a plan of action conforming to the situation and the gong rang announcing the midday meal which Fritz prepared.

Jack held the wheel while the rest sat down to the table, and a good dinner was partaken of.

At its conclusion Black Ben made a signal to his friends, whereupon they each drew a revolver and covered Tim, Fritz and Raymond.

Startled exclamations escaped the surprised trio.

"Dare to utter a word above a whisper, and you are dead men!" Black Ben hissed, as he watched the effect of this maneuver.

"Treachery!" gasped Raymond, turning deathly pale.

"Vot dis means alretty?" muttered Fritz, utterly agast.

"Looker here, my lads," began Tim, half arising.

"Silence!" hissed the brigand chief.

"But I wanter know—"

"You are at our mercy!"

"Wot for?"

"So you can do my gang no harm!"

This remark let our friends understand the situation better. They could not have been more surprised had the skies fallen.

It was patent that these men were the very ones they were after.

"The brigands!" groaned Raymond.

"Exactly," asserted Black Ben, with a diabolical grin.

"Dot seddles it!" gasped the Dutch boy.

"Good Lord, how we've been sold!" exclaimed Tim in deep chagrin.

"If any of you resist, it will sign your death warrant!" grimly said the brigand, as he produced a ball of marline from his pocket, and began to bind them hand and foot.

None of the trio dared to resist him, for the three revolvers in the hands of the rest were staring them point blank in their faces, and might go off on the slightest provocation.

Within a few minutes they were all bound and gagged.

Not the slightest noise had accompanied this work, for Black Ben warned them that a shot would reward the first one who attempted to alarm Jack by any undue means.

As soon as they were rendered helpless the brigand chief hastily whispered some instructions to his friends.

He then approached the companionway stairs leading up into the pilot-house, the rest stealing after him.

Reaching the wheel-house, he approached Jack.

"Finished your lunch already?" asked the unsuspecting youth, turning with a smile and glancing at the rascal.

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded Black Ben, touching his forelock, "and a very good meal it was, too."

"Fritz is an excellent cook."

"I agree with you. But I've come up to have a word with you."

"Indeed. What is it you wish?"

"Do you see this revolver, sir?"

He aimed the weapon point-blank at Jack.

The youth glanced around in some surprise.

It instantly dawned upon his mind that there was trouble. But his presence of mind did not for a moment desert him.

"That's a peculiar question," he remarked, coolly.

"Very," was the dry rejoinder. "This weapon is loaded."

"Likely enough," assented Jack, never flinching. "What of it?"

"Unless you instantly hold up your hands and submit I am going to press the trigger and fire a ball into your brain!"

"Why are you doing this?"

"To gain control of this craft."

"For what purpose?"

"Did you ever hear of Black Ben?"

"The chief of the brigands of the coral-isles?"

"Yes. That's me."

Jack was astonished.

He keenly surveyed the man.

Then he remarked in angry tones:

"You've deceived me very cleverly, I must admit."

"As you understand the situation now, you had better surrender."

"Wait! If I do, every one on this boat will drown!"

"How do you mean?" was the startled query.

"By looking out the window you will see that this boat is sinking."

And as it was, for by engaging the man in conversation and keeping his wits about him, Jack had gained enough time to pull one of the levers to submerge the boat.

The brigand saw that the youth had told him the truth.

"Blast it!" he yelled, as he recoiled. "She is going down!"

"If you will order your friends to close up the doors and windows down below, and bolt them, I can get the boat near enough to land ere she goes down, to save our lives."

That was enough for Black Ben.

He yelled to his friends to do as Jack said, and dove down stairs.

The doors and windows all closed with spring locks, which could not be unfastened by any one who did not understand them.

As soon as the boat was thus rendered water tight, Jack pulled the valves wide open, and as the brine rushed into the reservoirs the Simumon plunged under the sea.

Down she went deeper and deeper, until she at last attained a depth of eighty feet, and bottom appeared.

The sudden gloom which filled the boat as she went under, scared the four sailors, and Black Ben yelled in terrified tones:

"Escape, or you'll drown, boys, we're under water!"

They made a rush for the doors, but failed to open them.

A mocking laugh escaped Jack as he witnessed their fright, and arranged the boat's mechanism to work properly.

"I've caught you!" he cried, exultantly.

"How do you open the doors?" yelled Black Ben, frantically up to him.

"That's my secret," coolly answered Jack.

"We will drown here like rats in a trap."

"Of course you will, unless you all obey me."

"What can we do to save ourselves—to get out of here?"

"By pulling on that brass bar near the stairs you can open the door."

The man seized a hand rail eagerly and tugged at it.

Of course the door did not open.

"I can't budge it!" he yelled up at the youth.

"Call your companions to help you," advised Jack.

The brigand did so.

And the moment they all had hold of the rail Jack turned a heavy current of electricity into it, and they couldn't let go!

A wild chorus of yells escaped them.

They squirmed, writhed, and their faces were contorted.

"Got you again!" laughed Jack, stopping the boat.

"Oh!" yelled Black Ben, in horror. "What is this?"

"I'm full o' pricklin' red-hot pins!" yelled the man next to him.

"Lor'! I can't le' go!" howled the next one.

"Stop it—stop it, or I'll die!" screamed the fourth.

Jack paid no heed to them.

He knew that they were caught so they couldn't escape. Passing down below, he saw the plight his friends were in, and drawing a knife he severed their bonds.

As soon as the gags were out of their mouths, they arose and the old sailor asked, breathlessly:

"How'd ye git thier best o' 'em, my lad?"

"Caught them on the hand-rail, and switched an electric current into the shell of the boat to reach them."

The four sailors were grasping the rail next to the stairs, and were then shouting, swearing, dancing and convulsively twitching, jerking and contorting their limbs.

"It's Black Ben, the chief of the brigands!" said Raymond.

"Ay," replied Jack, "and they were making fools of us. By practicing their sharp deception they gained a foothold on our craft for the purpose of robbing her. Since finding out what our mission was, had they succeeded in their plans, it is likely enough that they would have put us out of the way."

The youth then told his friends how he had gained the upper hand of them.

"Sbiminey Christmas!" ejaculated Fritz, delightedly. "Ve ditn'd coult hat some pedder lucks as to caughd 'em dot way. Now ve got der chief ouf dot cang, der rest been like a gooses niit its het cut off alretty. Vot ve do mit him, Shack?"

"Manacle them first, and then question them afterwards."

Tim stumped back into the storeroom and brought back a number of handcuffs, which were put on the ankles and wrists of the prisoners.

As soon as they were secured, Jack turned off the electric current.

When their first sense of relief was over they raved, swore and stormed at our friends in the most terrible manner.

None of them expected such a turn of events.

"Come now!" said Jack, sternly to them. "You'll have to stop that kind of talk. If you persist I'll shock you all again!"

"No, no!" gasped Black Ben, in horror. "Don't you do it."

"Thon behave yourselves!"

"We'll keep still."

"See here!" exclaimed Raymond.

"What do you want?" the brigand asked.

"You have got a prisoner named Raymond on Ari Island."

"Yes, a ship-owner."

"That man is my father."

"Is he?"

"Have you done any harm to him?"

"No. We expected a ransom for him."

"Thank Heaven, he is safe. But how about the crew of the Sea Sprite?"

"Every one of them are alive, bound out as slaves."

"What have you done with them?"

"They are made to work at fishing, gathering cocoanuts and cowries, weaving and toddy drawing. The cowrie-shells, cocoanuts, tortoise-shell and bonito-fish, are sent to Ceylon and Sumatra."

"How many men have you got backing you?" asked Jack.

"Several hundred natives, and my friends here."

"Doesn't the Sultan of Kings' Island govern you?"

"The sultan has one chief of law and religion, called a Fandiari. Over each of the thirteen atolls, or collection of isles, there is a king's agent, called Atolu-veri, who collects the revenue. This fellow is generally one of the royal family or a vizier's son, often resides at Male, and employs a deputy. On each island is a head man, called Rarhuveri. There is also on each isle containing forty inhabitants, a Katibu, or Scribe, who acts as judge and minister. We are subject to all these officials, and pay them heavily to leave us unmolested."

They questioned the man at some length further.

Jack then sent his boat to the surface.

She arose in the midst of a fleet of peculiar boats, with one sail and big out-riggers, the bows and sterns being exactly alike, as these boats only employed the trade winds to sail in.

Coming up under the largest boat of the fleet, the Simoon capsized it, and its occupants were spilled into the water.

A wild scene of confusion ensued, for the sudden advent of the electric boat rising from the sea startled the natives.

Moreover, the capsized boat contained the sultan of the Maldives and several of his councillors, all of whom were ingloriously dumped into the sea, and received a good ducking.

A loud chorus of cries arose from the natives, and while some of the boats hurried to the rescue of the dignitaries, the rest vengefully surrounded the Simoon.

CHAPTER VII.

BEGINNING HOSTILITIES.

THE natives had been quick to see that the electric boat was an ordinary vessel with a human being at the wheel, and with their courage restored and their indignation aroused over the accident which happened to their dignitaries, they began to menace the young inventor.

Fritz had joined Jack, and Raymond hurried out on deck with Tim.

The Simoon was then opposite Rasdu islets.

"We've upset the sultan's boat!" exclaimed Raymond.

"Is that so?" queried Jack, who had opened a window.

"His attendants are furious over it."

"Can you make yourself understood to apologize to them?"

"No, but I believe the sultan speaks French and Portuguese."

"I'll try him with the latter language, and explain our mission here in hopes of gaining his co-operation."

"As I'm afraid he is in the ring with the brigands, you won't get much satisfaction," laughed Raymond.

Jack left the wheel in Fritz's hands and went below.

He saw that the natives were not at all disposed to be friendly; but whether this was from an aversion of white men or on account of the accident, he did not yet know.

Jack was aware, however, that they were at one time the deadliest foes of the white race, in consequence of the trouble they once had with the white men who once resided on their isles.

Upon reaching the deck, Jack saw that the sultan and his viziers had been picked up by one of the other boats.

The out-rigger crafts surrounding the Simoon were filled with furious men, who were drawing nearer to the electric boat every moment, their excited language being a mixture of Singhalese dialect, more or less mixed with Persian, Arabic, Malay, Tamil and Portuguese.

They looked like the Malabar people, the boatmen only wearing a loin cloth, while the dignitaries were clothed somewhat like Arabs.

Armed with spears, bows and arrows, and other implements made of coral and *kundu* and *kurudi* woods, it looked to Jack as if they meant to attack him.

Upon observing this, he directed his attention to the boat occupied by the sultan, and shouted to him in Portuguese:

"Call off your men, Mohammed Moldin! This craft belongs

to the navy of the United States! If they attack us we will shoot them!"

Luckily the sultan, like Jack, understood several languages.

He immediately said something to his attendants, and one of them blew a shrill blast upon a shell horn.

Instantly all the boats glided over to the sultan's craft.

Seeing that the difficulty was arranged, the king of the coral isles had his boat sent nearer to Jack's craft.

He then addressed the youth in guttural Portuguese, demanding:

"How came you to capsize my boat?"

"It was purely an accident," replied Jack, in the same language,

"I do not understand how you happened to be under the water."

"Because this is a submarine boat."

"What! Can it travel beneath the sea?"

"Yes—as easily as upon the surface."

"Have you business at the coral islands?"

"I have been commissioned by the United States government to proceed here, rescue some prisoners from a band of noted brigands who infest the Ari islands, and destroy them without mercy," said Jack.

"No such people exist there."

"I beg to differ with you, for I have already caught their leader."

"What—Black Ben—"

"You have committed yourself as a liar! You just denied the existence of these brigands and now admit you know their chief."

"Ha! You have insulted me."

"I notice you are quick to take offense to pick a quarrel!"

"You shall be arrested and executed for such talk to me and for coming here to disturb the peace of my kingdom."

"Do you refuse me your assistance?"

"Emphatically!"

"Then I'll treat you as an enemy."

The sultan said something to his followers.

The shell horn was sounded again as the king's boat glided away, and then the whole fleet swarmed toward the Simoon.

"War!" muttered Jack.

"What did he say?" queried Raymond.

Jack explained briefly,

"They're a-sirin' at us, my lad!" said Tim.

"Inside with you or we'll get hit!"

They hastened into the cabin.

A shower of spears and arrows had come flying toward the Simoon from the out-rigger boats.

But they broke harmlessly against the metal hull.

Our friends made haste to pull the metal shutters over the glass windows, and Jack turned to Tim and said:

"We will have to show these fellows that we mean business."

"Ay, now, that's ther talk, my hearty."

"Go down below and fire a shot from the gun at the most aggressive boat in the fleet, Tim."

The old sailor nodded and limped away.

Jack then joined Fritz in the pilot-house, and peering out through a loophole in the shutters he saw the Maldivian boats come flying toward them rapidly.

All the dusky inmates were firing shower after shower of weapons at the Simoon, but the frail implements broke harmlessly against the aluminum hull.

The old sailor had loaded the gun.

He brought it to bear upon one of the boats and fired.

Away whistled the projectile over the water, followed by a thud of escaping air from the gun.

It sped true to its mark, and reaching the boat it struck and exploded with a thunderous detonation that shook the sea.

The boat was blown to fragments.

A mass of splintered wood flew up into the air in which

were mingled the shattered bodies of the luckless natives, and when the debris came down on the sea but little remained.

An awful cry of woe escaped the rest when they observed the terrible destruction wrought by the gun.

A moment afterwards the sultan's shell horn sounded a warning to retreat, and the fleet sped away.

They tacked against the trade wind by simply shifting their sails instead of coming about.

Off they sailed making fully fourteen knots, and all heading for the southeast toward King's island.

The Simoon was covered with scores of broken weapons, but was entirely uninjured from the attack.

Jack started the big paddle wheels revolving.

"I'm going to pursue them," he remarked, "and give them a lesson they won't forget in a hurry!"

The sultan's fleet had a long lead, and Jack was confident of overhauling them, when suddenly he observed that the Simoon began to slacken speed and fall behind.

"At this rate they will escape us!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"Donner vetter! someding vos proke!" cried Fritz, excitedly.

"Run down into the engine-room and find out what the trouble is."

The Dutch boy complied.

Slower and still slower went the electric boat.

Presently she came to a pause.

At this juncture Fritz yelled up through the telephone:

"De oil in der engine reservoir vos all used ub. I fill me der tank again in vun minutes more, Shack."

"Can't I couple onto the batteries?" demanded the youth, quickly.

"Nein! I vos got to charge, glean und fix 'em to-day, und all auf dem don't vos in orders for uses."

A delay had to occur, impatient as Jack was, and he saw his enemies' boats flying rapidly away.

"Tim, fire a shot after them!" he shouted in the 'phone.

"Ay, ay," came the cheery reply from below.

Jack unfastened the shutters, and saw a projectile go howling from the pneumatic gun after the retreating fleet.

The swell of the sea caused the Simoon to rise just as the shot was discharged, and sent the shell flying over the boats.

It struck one of the coral reefs some distance in advance of the outrigger boats and burst with a fierce report.

The coral was blown to fragments.

"A shot wasted!" muttered Jack in disgust.

"Will I give 'em another?" Tim yelled up to him.

"No, not now. It isn't worth while, old fellow."

"They'll outsail us, my lad."

"Oh, we'll soon run them down again."

Just then Fritz shouted up:

"Dere! De oil dank vos filled. Let her go, Shack!"

"Good! I'll reach King's Island close behind them."

He pulled the lever, and the boat started off rapidly again, just as the sultan's fleet, passing through the Five Degree Channel, went around the isles toward Male.

After a short run, Cardiva Island was reached.

The Simoon then turned southward.

The sultan's residence and the capital of the kingdom was on the Isle of Male, which lies near the middle of the archipelago on the east side.

All the boats of the fleet had reached it.

As the Simoon ran down towards it, Jack saw that the isle was a mile long and three-fourths of a mile broad.

Its population then numbered about 2000 souls.

The island has been encompassed by walls and bastions, but they then continued in repair only on the north and west sides.

On the north stood an old fort, evidently of Portuguese construction, which then contained a few old guns.

Advantage was taken on the north and west sides of the encircling reef, as the base of a wall which had been built

up so as to form the lagoon into a harbor for small craft, having a depth of 6,612 feet and a width of 150 yards in the extreme.

Jack saw that the town was laid out in long, regular streets at right angles, shaded with trees in compounds, with light fences excluding the streets, and were surrounded with fruit trees and flowers.

The Sultan's palace, a large upper-roomed house, occupied with its appurtenances one-fourth of a square mile, inclosed by a shallow ditch choked up with vegetation.

Our friends observed that the houses were large cottages with peaked roofs, thatched with cocoa leaves; there were several mosques and one minaret.

The fleet had gone through a breach in the reef, and some of their crews had reached the shore and hastened to the fort, where the old guns were manned and trained to bear on the Simoon.

CHAPTER VIII.

OPERATING THE TERRIBLE GUN.

UPON observing the war-like demonstrations of the natives, Jack brought his boat to a pause in the lagoon entrance.

All the inhabitants of the town had been aroused, and came swarming from their houses, shouting excitedly and rushing back and forth among the banyans, pippal and bread-fruit trees.

The movements of the people were partially hidden by the dense shrubbery of pine-apples, pomegranates, plantains and tubers.

"They've got a fortress, and guns too, Fritz!" exclaimed Jack.

"Shiminey crips! Vos dot so?" asked the astonished fat boy.

"They must have been left here by the early Portuguese settlers."

"Den ve vas haft a bick fights mit dem nicker."

Fritz pointed at a large number of jet black men on shore.

There were marked distinctions of rank among the Maldives, divided into six classes, two of the highest forming a pure aristocracy, and the negroes, called Kallo, consisted of the commonest people, of whom the toddy-drawers were regarded the lowest.

Yet these negroes now formed the standing army, and were then being armed and prepared to defend the island.

The intense excitement of the population made Jack smile.

"They think they can repulse us," he remarked, disdainfully, "but I'll teach them what our power is with two shots."

"Dit you vos goin' to go ashore und fighd 'em?"

"No; I intend to remain right where I am."

At this moment there sounded a thunderous report from the fortress, a belch of fire and smoke, and a shot came flying through the air.

It was poorly aimed by the inexperienced gunner, and went whistling wide of the Simoon.

Still it plainly showed Jack that the natives were armed with powerful modern weapons of defense, and meant to utilize them to destroy his boat if they had the opportunity of doing so.

"Tim!" the youth shouted down to the old sailor.

"Wot now, my lad?" queried Tim.

"Do you see that fort?"

"Ay—ay."

"Fire a shot at it."

"Thar won't be nuthin' left when I strike it."

Just then a tremendous report rang out on the island.

No ball came toward the Simoon, however, but our friends observed a glaring mass of fire, a vast cloud of smoke, and heard a chorus of wild shrieks.

"In attempting to fire a second gun they have burst it?" exclaimed Jack with a grim smile. "It was old and rusty."

from disuse very likely, and they must have overcharged it."

"If dey vos keeb on dot vay," replied Fritz, "dey all vill suicide committed, und leaf noddings for us to do alretty." Tim had the pneumatic gun ready by this time.

There were delicate instruments on the weapon for gaining the most accurate aim at objects, and the old sailor carefully arranged his weapon and fired.

A screech like that of a demoniacal being escaped the projectile as it described a curve through the air.

Then it landed plumb upon the fortress.

An earthquake could scarcely have made a greater commotion and report than the shot did when it exploded.

The entire island shook from the concussion, a chorus of cries arose from over a thousand throats, and amid a brilliant flash of fire the fortress was blown to fragments, and the pieces were hurled thousands of feet in the air.

It was an imposing but appalling scene.

The natives were so terrified, in fact, that they fled in all directions, uttering the wildest cries, and manifesting the greatest alarm.

"That settles it!" said Jack, as he watched their fright.

"Dim vos a dandy mit de gun?" chuckled Fritz, delightedly.

"Shall I gi' them another one?" called the old sailor.

"No! We have silenced their battery. That will do," replied Jack.

"I never before witnessed such awful power in a high explosive," remarked Raymond, admiringly, as he came in.

"We have plainly shown the sultan what we can do if we wish to go to extremes," said Jack. "I think he has been taught a lesson he won't forget. Knowing know what terrific power we wield, he will not be likely to molest us while we are hunting down the brigands, to whom I am sure he has given his patronage."

"If he does, the Lord help him."

"Ve head for Ari islands now, Shack?"

"At once. I am burning with impatience to run across the followers of Black Ben, and rescue their prisoners."

"We pedder stob by vun ouf der islands first und got some trinkin' vater," said Fritz, "Our subbly vos short running."

"Very well. We won't stop here, nor at South Male. It will be necessary for us to run southward from here, in order to reach the Kuda Huvadu Channel, and we can pause at either Felidu or Malaku Islands to replenish our tanks."

And so saying the young inventor started the boat away.

"Can we get within the lagoons there?" asked Raymond.

"I believe there are entrances to most of the ring islands," Jack replied. "The depth within the lagoons is generally from five to seven fathoms, but at Ari it reaches twelve."

As the boat went along, they saw that the outer edges of the rings were bordered with living coral, within which was a flat surface of coral rock, upon which sand, partially indurated, had accumulated and been converted into islets clothed with vegetation.

Such islets sometimes filled the whole ring of reefs, and at other places were mere strips occupying only a segment of it.

The highest part of the islets were generally about six feet above water, the surface sand was about three feet thick, mixed with vegetable matter that formed a light soil, below it white sand, then soft sandstone.

All the islands were well clothed with wood, including many fine trees and the ordinary shrubs found in the Ceylon coast jungle; where the jungle was cleared, grass grew luxuriantly.

Low as the islands were, the characteristic cocoa palm, on which the nuts grew as big as an orange, could be seen from a masthead at fifteen miles.

As Jack knew, nearly all the isles afforded water, the quality of which varied, it not being an uncommon thing to

see two wells six feet deep within a few yards of each other, one brackish and the other excellent.

A lookout for a good landing place was maintained by Tim, who came up from the gun-deck and took up a position in the bow, with a glass in his hand.

The group south of King's Island was passed, and when they reached Felidu, the old sailor shouted:

"Port your helni, my lad! Thar's a settlement ter ther le'ward."

"All right, Tim; can you see a breach in the reef?"

"Ay, ay, an' a wide one, too!"

"Fritz, prepare the tanks for filling."

"Yah!" said the young Dutchman, and he hastened away. Raymond went down with him.

Following Tim's instructions, Jack steered his boat for the opening in the reef, and as his boat paddled her way across the lagoon, he saw the shore lined with a number of natives.

They did not betray any fear, and the young inventor ran his boat up to the shore, and shouted to them in Portuguese:

"Can we get any water here?"

"Yes," replied one of the women with a nod.

Though suspicious of strangers, these people were hospitable, and among themselves kindly and affectionate to their kindred, and the women were much lighter and better looking than the men.

The *Rarhu-veri* or head man of this village soon drew near, and in broken Portuguese asked Jack if he came to trade.

"No," the youth replied; "but if you will fetch us good water we will pay you in good Anglo-Indian rupees."

This offer pleased the head man, and he readily agreed.

The old cash of the Maldives was the curious *larin* or "fish-hook money" made of bent rods of silver, but this was replaced by coins of base metal bearing the same name, and cowries were used to some extent.

Calling a number of the people, the head man instructed them what to do, and they formed a line from a well up to the Simoon, each armed with a wooden calabash.

One man filled a calabash with water, and it was passed from one man to the other, until it finally reached the boat, where it was emptied into a reservoir on deck communicating by a rubber pipe with the water tank down below.

In this manner measure after measure was passed aboard, until finally the tank was filled.

Jack had provided himself with a large number of Indian rupees, and liberally paid the people for their service.

He then bought some fruit, sweet potatoes, vermicelli, chillies, and cowrie baskets and then started the boat off.

It was late in the afternoon then.

The shadows of twilight had fallen when they reached the channel, and finally headed for Ari.

Supper was served by Fritz and Tim remained at the wheel.

The boat had run northward in the great channel formed by the long ring of isles when Raymond finished his supper and went up into the wheel-house to join the old sailor.

"You've changed our course I see," he remarked.

"Ay, an' we're a-headin' fer Ari now," replied Tim.

"It looks like a stormy night coming on, Tim."

"Shouldn't wonder, my lad."

"Do you think you could manage the boat in here, if a squall should burst upon us, old fellow?"

"Me?" asked Tim, shooting a disdainful glare at his companion out of his good eye. "Why, bless yer heart, when I wuz in ther navy I steered ther ole frigate Wabash through a channel on a dark night with snags croppin' out o' ther water within a foot o' ther hull on each quarter, which would a-wrecked her if she hit 'em."

"Why, what brought you into such a dangerous locality, Tim?"

"We'd run through the channel afore ther gloom set in, ter reach a bay whar one o' our enemies wuz a-hidin', an' had

gone in ter bombard her, when all at once a submarine wol-caner busted up from ther water. It blowed our enemy's ship sky high, an' we had ter run ter git out o' ther way o' a shower o' rocks wot came flyin' down, or git pounded full o' holes if we stayed thar."

"And did you escape all right?"

"Ay, but it wuz tough work ter steer that boat fust ter one side an' then to t'other ter dodge them 'ere fallin' rocks, yet I worked her so well that not one o' ther fallin' stones hit her—"

"Hold on there! How could you dodge them working the boat right and left if you was encompassed by snags in the sea only a foot away on each quarter, to strike which meant destruction?"

Tim turned very red in the face and looked abashed.

For a moment he did not know what answer to make; but just as he realized into what a pickle he had got himself there sounded the distant discharge of fire-arms ahead.

"Lordy!" he gasped, glad to have something occur to relieve him of his embarrassment. "What's that 'ere firin'?"

"Pistol or musket shots?" said Raymond, peering out.

Far ahead of them in the gathering darkness they saw a large ship, surrounded by a large flotilla of native boats.

"It's ther brigands o' ther coral isles attackin' a ship!" cried Tim, correctly surmising what was transpiring.

CHAPTER IX.

DRAGGED AFLOAT.

"TURN out! Turn out! All hands on deck!"

Raymond, uttering this warning cry, ran down into the cabin.

It startled Jack and Fritz, who sat at a table reading.

"What's the matter?" breathlessly asked Jack, bounding to his feet.

"A fight—a ship attacked by the brigands of Ari.

"What! Have you sighted the coral isles we are after?"

"Yes, and they are only a league away."

"*Donner und blitzen!* Gief me a gun!" cried Fritz, arising.

They all rushed out on deck.

Tim had been keeping the boat going toward the scene of the conflict under every volt of electro-motive force she could gather from her dynamo, and she was rapidly bearing down upon the scene of the conflict.

By the time the three reached the deck, the boat had drawn nearer to the combatants, and Tim had turned on the electric current into the powerful search-light.

Now a powerful shaft of blinding electricity shot forth across the waters upon the distant boats, and in five minutes more it was flooding them in its glow.

Jack then caught a good view of the scene of conflict.

It was a large packet ship, with all sails set, and an American flag at her masthead.

She had run upon a sunken reef, and there she lay keeled over a little, as the tide was receding from under her, the gallant crew fighting to keep back the dusky natives, who were crowding their boats around her.

Armed with rifles and pistols, the bandits, numbering several hundreds, were waging a furious warfare upon the unfortunate crew.

As the electric boat drew nearer to the ship, Jack could see that the sailors could not cope with their foes.

Indeed, they were then fairly beaten.

"Faster, Tim, faster!" he shouted up to the old sailor.

"My Lord, lad, she can't do better!"

"Oh, had we only come sooner!"

"Dey vos got der sailors licked alratty," said Fritz.

"There's a flag of truce now!" cried Raymond.

The despairing sailors had given in.

A wild yell went up from the victorious brigands, and they marched the prisoners aboard of their out-rigger boats.

These native vessels were flat on the starboard side and

rounded on the port side, carried immense lateen sails of woven cocoa-husk, and had large crews.

As the electric light flashed upon them, and the natives saw the Simoon approaching, they hastily sailed over to the nearest isle with their prisoners.

By the time Jack's boat reached the packet ship, not a soul but half a dozen wounded sailors were left upon her.

Like beasts of prey, the brigands had been lying in wait for their victims, and pouncing out upon them when they became caught on the reef, they had fought and caught them, and then returned to their lair again.

"We are too late!" exclaimed Jack in disgust.

"Dey vos got efery mutter's son ouf dem," Fritz commented.

"But they had no time to rifle the ship," said Raymond.

"I'll ha' ter luff up, Jack," shouted Tim just then.

"What for?"

"Cause thar's a barrier reef surroundin' ther isle."

It was upon this sunken reef that the ship had struck.

This stopped the Simoon astern of the ship, and by the search-light they now saw the top of the reef just protruding its head above the water.

As the boat paused against the stern of the ship, Jack clambered aboard of her.

"Help, messmate, help!" shouted a feeble voice.

It was one of the six wounded sailors, and he was beckoning to Jack, thereby causing the rest to look up.

The young inventor approached them, and going from one to the other, he saw that five of them would recover.

The sixth had received a fatal wound in the breast, and was at that moment breathing his last.

It was a pitiful sight.

He uttered a faint cry and breathed heavily.

"Stick to the flag, boys!" he screamed, deliriously.

Then he sank back, uttering a deep groan, and as the death rattle sounded in his throat, he stretched himself out at full length, his jaw fell, his eyes became set, and he was gone.

"Poor fellow!" sorrowfully muttered Jack.

The death of this brave sailor made a deep impression upon the young inventor, and caused him to feel a longing to seek vengeance upon the rascals who killed him.

Indeed, throughout the stirring scenes that followed, the ruthless murder of that man arose like a specter before him, and nerved him on against the brigands.

He turned sadly away from the body.

Shouting to Fritz to come aboard with some bandages and the medicine box, he returned to the wounded men and set about to make them as comfortable as the situation would allow.

This done, he was joined by the Dutch boy.

"Five of them remain alive," he remarked.

"Den de prigants vos kill vun ouf dem?"

"Ay. Help me to dress their wounds, Fritz."

They soon had the men washed and bandaged, and in half an hour the whole crowd were upon their feet.

In the meantime the brigands had sailed their boats around the island and disappeared.

"You have saved us from death, sir," one of the sailors said in grateful tones to Jack. "We are very grateful. But Heaven only knows what is to become of my poor messmates."

"Do not alarm yourself about them," reassuringly answered the young inventor. "Before I leave this vicinage, they shall have their liberty again. I am here to wipe them out."

"Is that so? Then there's some hope left for them."

"How did you run your craft on this reef?"

"A native pilot came aboard, and under a pretext of guiding us past the Maldives, he wrecked us here."

"He was a mere stool-pigeon for the brigands, who wanted to rifle the ship and hold her company for ransom."

Jack dove down below and examined the hull.

It was uninjured.

He then returned to the deck.

"Fritz," said he, briskly, "I believe we can get her afloat again."

"How we done dot?"

"Fasten a line between her and the Simoon and pull her off the reef."

"I go me apoard und dry id," assented Fritz.

As he hastened away Jack turned to the sailor again.

"Could you and your friends work this caast over to Ceylon if I were to get her afloat for you?" he asked.

"Easily," assented the man, in eager tones.

"Good! Then we will try it."

"But I hate to leave my friends behind—"

"You can do them no good by remaining; besides, if you keep the ship here, you hold her liable to a second attack and capture."

"That's so. Will you look out for my companions?"

"Of course I will. They will soon join you at D—"

"Good enough, sir."

Fritz now rove the towing hawser, and when it was made fast to the Simoon, she was started away.

There was an enormous power in her wheels, and the ship was bolstered up by a cushion of water that aided her materially, as there was little tide around these coral isles.

After some tugging the ship began to move.

"Hurrah!" cried Jack, delightedly. "She's going—she's going, and we'll yet thwart the brigands in their design to rob her."

"Dey only vas gone avay so dot ve tinks dey vas gone for goots," said Fritz. "But so soon dot our becks vos durned beck dey vill coom und got avay mit all dose walubables vot vas by der shib alretty."

"If!" laughed Jack. "There's a big 'if' there, Fritz."

"Fer sure. Ach, du lieber—dere she goes!"

Splash—swash! went the boat just then.

She slid in the water free of the reef, for the electric side-wheeler had been pulling with a strength of ten thousand horse power, and thus dragged the ship into clear water.

The ship was free.

Her sails were set and there was a fair breeze.

Jack directed the wounded sailors how to steer to reach the Five Degree Channel without danger and with a parting understanding with them he and Fritz debarked.

Reaching the deck of the Simoon, the youth watched the ship until she disappeared from view.

"Now which way?" questioned Tim.

"Beat carefully around the barrier reef until we find the opening into the lagoon, so that we can get in at the rascals," replied Jack.

The boat glided away.

Her search-light was now used most effectively, as its rays were swept over the circular basin.

A half tour was made of the reef, but unfortunately they found that the fleet had left the lagoon by an entrance on the side opposite to that at which the ship had been reefed.

"They have disappeared!" said Jack, in disgust.

"But dey must be somewheres arount here," suggested Fritz.

"Decidedly; yet where?"

"Dot bodders me."

"In this gloom we can't find them."

"Nein. I tink ve pedder gief ub for to-nighd."

"There's no he'p for it."

Just as these words escaped Jack's lips he heard a yell in Raymond's voice coming from within the cabin.

Both Jack and Fritz started with apprehension, and then rushed for the forward door which stood ajar and flung it open.

"Jack! Jack!" came Raymond's voice from the stern.

It was followed by the sound of flying footsteps.

"What's the matter?" shouted the youth.

"Come this way—quick!"

"Heavens! What ails him?" gasped the puzzled youth.

He rushed through the rooms.

Just as he reached the mess-room he heard a pistol shot. Bang!

It rang through the boat loudly.

Crash! went a bullet past the young inventor.

"Oh, I'm shot!" shrieked Raymond, from the after part of the boat, and they heard a thud as he fell.

Startled, Jack dashed into the rear chamber.

Upon the floor lay Raymond half senseless.

"What is the matter?" cried Jack, anxiously.

"Black Ben and his three friends have escaped!" groaned Raymond, and before he could say another word, he lapsed into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE CORAL CAVE.

LEAVING Fritz bending over the wounded man, Jack dashed out the open door of the water chamber.

He reached the after deck just in time to see the last of his prisoners dive overboard and disappear in the gloom.

Jack had drawn a revolver upon hearing the first alarm, and now fired several shots at random down at the water.

None of them seemed to have hit any one, however, as he heard no human voices.

Disgusted over the escape of his prisoners, and wondering how they happened to get their manacles off, the youth then returned to the water chamber.

Fritz had turned on an electric lamp.

By its glow Jack now saw that the ship-owner had partly recovered his senses.

The ball which whistled past Jack, and was buried in the woodwork, had grazed Raymond's head, inflicting a slight scalp wound.

No serious damage was done, however.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered, and had regained his faculties, he asked as he placed his hand to the cut which Fritz had bandaged:

"Was I badly hurt?"

"Only skin teep," replied the fat youth.

"And the prisoners?"

"Escaped?" regretfully answered Jack.

"What a pity! I tried hard to stop them."

"How did they get free of their shackles?"

"By some means they procured a file and cut them."

"Pshaw! They must have been secretly working a long time to get away."

"No doubt of it."

"I'll search for them."

And so saying, Jack went up into the pilot-house.

On the floor in the ship's store-room lay the severed shackles and a file.

Jack told Tim what had happened, and the Simoon was steered around the barrier reef, the light was swept in every direction, but the escaped men were not seen.

They had effectually concealed themselves, or else had managed to escape from that vicinage.

"As long as the brigands see our light flaring about over the water here," said Jack at last, "they will give us a wide berth. I don't believe we can find Black Ben or his men in this gloom, and I was in hopes that the fleet might return to prey on the ship, as they didn't know that we had pulled her off the reef."

"Ay, but them lubbers wot escaped must a-heerd us a-talkin' abont savin' ther ship," said Tim, taking a chew of plug; "an' if they jines ther frien's, they'll post 'em."

"Then in order to keep them mystified about our movements I'm going to submerge the Simoon and keep her buried under the sea until we can rise and pounce upon our enemies when they least expect us," said Jack.

He retained possession of the wheel, and sending Tim down below to prepare the boat for a descent, he brought her to a standstill.

An examination of the gauges showed Jack that the air

reservoirs were filled, the electrical appurtenances were in good working order, and the pumps worked freely.

As soon as Tim called up to him that everything was closed up, Jack pulled the valves open, started the spray of quicklime, water and potash to purify the confined air, and the Simoon went beneath the sea.

The depth along the reefs was tremendous, Jack knew, and in order to gain some idea of the soundings he let the boat continue to sink.

When she was built Jack had gauged her resistance, and had constructed her to withstand a pressure of 217 1-2 pounds to the square inch.

This meant that she could safely go down to a depth of 500 feet.

Few of the most expert divers can descend deeper than 175 feet without the most serious consequences; hence it will be seen that our friends, equipped with powerful lights and with plenty of air, enjoyed wonderful advantages.

Jack kept his glance fixed upon the gauges.

Raymond came in.

"Isn't it getting warm in here?" he asked, uneasily.

"No wonder; we are three hundred feet beneath the sea," laughed Jack.

The ship-owner gave a violent start.

He peered at the depth register, and it corroborated Jack:

"Good Heaven! Has any accident happened?" he asked.

"No; I am sinking her on purpose," laughed the youth.

"What for?"

"To verify the surmise that these isles are based on extinct volcanoes."

"Isn't it a dangerous experiment?"

"No. I'll cool the air a trifle for you."

He pulled two of the levers.

One of them started the electric fans spinning on the pony motors, and the other circulated the sea water through a number of pipes running like arteries through the boat.

The air became cooler at once.

Still, every one was sweating profusely.

The Simoon remained close to the coral wall, which was perfectly perpendicular, and the rate of her descent was very rapid.

Within a minute more Jack shut off the influx of water, and her descent was stopped at four hundred feet from the top.

The heat was becoming unbearable again.

After a pause he sent her down one hundred feet more.

Still no bottom was seen.

He then deflected the search-light.

Its shaft pierced the murky brine, and he now caught sight of a rough mass of rocks on which the reef was perched, at a distance of 250 feet below the boat.

He dared not drop the boat down to them, for at their depth the boat would have to bear a pressure of 326 1-4 pounds to the square inch.

It was enough to crush her as flat as a pancake.

"There can be no doubt that these isles rise from the ruins of extinct volcano craters," said Jack, when he had finished his survey, "for there's the evidence. The sounding plumbmet told the truth to the scientists who have investigated this place."

"If you don't send the boat up soon I'll perish!" said Raymond, gaspingly. "Despite the fan wheels and water pipes you can't keep it cold down here."

Jack laughed and started the pumps.

Tons of water were poured out of the boat, and she began to slowly ascend to the top again.

The higher she mounted the cooler the air became, and her inmates could soon breathe freely again.

Jack did not send her all the way to the surface.

He kept her at a depth of thirty-two feet.

The watch was then divided, and the youth turned in.

On the following morning breakfast was eaten under the sea, and Jack then sent the boat toward the top.

A most peculiar event then occurred.

Instead of emerging into the broad light of day, the boat emerged from the surface within a huge cavern.

A cry of astonishment escaped the young inventor, and turning to Tim who was with him, he exclaimed:

"How is this? Did you notice the boat drifting during your watch?"

"Gee whiz—no! We must a-been carried here by a submarine current."

"That's a fact, Tim. But where is this cavern?"

"Can't be in the reef, my lad, 'cause it's too wide an' high."

"The reefs are narrow, sure enough, and never rise over six feet above the high tide mark," admitted Jack.

"Still this 'ere's a coral cave!"

"It must be under one of the islands."

The rest were called and apprised of the fact.

Above, the roof was only twelve or fifteen feet high, but the side walls of the huge cave were not seen at once.

Jack swept the search-light around, and he soon detected a wall ahead, toward which he ran the boat.

As soon as she reached the wall, they saw that there were innumerable ledges traversing it, upon which lay the skeletons of hundreds of human beings.

"This place is evidently a burial place of the Maldives," said Jack, as he peered out of the window, "and it must, therefore, have an outlet somewhere. I'll run the boat all around the place, and you keep a lookout, Tim."

"Ay—ay!" assented the old sailor, posting himself at one of the windows.

Keeping the boat near to the wall, Jack sent her ahead, and she made a complete circuit of the cavern.

Everywhere she went those scattered bones and grinning skulls were seen, some gleaming white and ghastly in the electric light, others a dark brown, some yellow, and a great many as black as ink.

There were complete skeletons, others had crumbled away into dust, numbers of the bones were cracked and broken, and while many retained the human form, the greater part of them were strewn in all directions.

It was a most weird and repulsive place, and was filled with armies of the rats and swarms of the bats that are known to infest the coral isles.

The rats were numerous and destructive, of the kind which climb the cocoa trees and devour the kernels, while the bats were of the species called in India, "flying fox," which also destroy the cocoa trees.

Besides these vampires, that doubtless feasted on the dead bodies lying on the ledges, there were numerous snakes that glided and squirmed among the bones.

A complete circuit of the cavern was made, and no sign of an opening was seen in the wall of the big place.

The boat returned to the place where the largest number of bodies lay, and Jack stopped her close to a ledge.

"I am going upon those ledges to see if there isn't a way to reach the upper ground of this island," said he.

Tim volunteered to go with him and he asserted.

Ariming themselves, they left the boat in the care of Fritz and Raymond, and got out on the ledge.

It slanted upward and they followed it.

The first path led them to several more, and carefully picking their way among the dead bodies, they continued on and finally penetrated a cleft in the wall.

Following it, they suddenly turned an abrupt bend, and saw the light of day in a large opening ahead of them.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRIGANDS' STRONGHOLD.

As Jack and Tim emerged from the opening, they saw that it was an arched opening in a coral pyramid, which stood in the middle of a small island.

On top of the pyramid there was a minaret forty feet high for the Islam call to prayer, practiced among the Maldives.

Close beside the minaret stood a stone mosque with a peculiar roof, built after the Hindoo style of architecture.

The island was circular in form, the top covered with white sand, and no vegetation except a sacred Bo-tree, revered by the Buddhists, shading the mosque, while the steep shore of the isle was encircled by a uniform row of tall palms.

It was a most singular island, and formed one of the group in the Ari atoll.

It was entirely deserted, to all appearances.

Jack and his companions climbed up on the minaret to gain an uninterrupted view of the surrounding isles of this group.

On the eastern sides of the atolls of Ari and North and South Nilandu, they saw seventy-three deep water channels through the barrier and on the western sides only twenty-five.

These openings were most numerous on those sides of the chain which were in juxtaposition, for across the water to the eastward lay the atolls of South Male, Felidu and Mulaku, the western sides of these having fifty-six openings and the eastern only thirty-seven.

"Looker thar!" said Tim, pointing to the northward. "We won't need ter use any o' them 'ere channels unless we has ter run away, 'cause thar's whar our quarry lies!"

"The brigands' island!" cried Jack, in delight.

Less than a quarter of a mile away there was an isle of the Ari group that presented a most formidable appearance.

It was the largest isle of the group, and not only was surrounded by a barrier reef, but in the center there was a beautiful lagoon sheltering a fleet of out-rigger boats.

All around the edge of the lagoon was built a ring of stone houses abutting the water in which the brigands dwelt, while the outer circumference of the island was encircled by a breastwork of coral rising from the precipitous shore to a height of five feet.

This wall was broken at intervals by bastions, from which protruded the muzzles of a number of guns that protected the place on every side.

The greater part of the isle was overgrown with a dense jungle cut by numerous paths up from which there rose tall, stately palms, and other trees and bushes, amid which flocks of goats and herds of cattle were browsing.

As there was but one canal leading into the central lagoon and the place was strongly garrisoned by a large body of watchful outlaws, a better stronghold was not to be had.

"What a magnificent retreat for their following," involuntarily cried Jack. "It is no wonder that they have been so successful in all their rascality. I suppose Black Ben and his pals have by this time returned to that place."

"If they've reached land arter escapin' from ther Simoon they're all hunkydory," replied Tim, giving a hitch at his pants; "but wot puzzles me is how them lubbers kin hold men prisoners here and git ransoms fer 'em!"

"The way the game was played on Raymond was this," replied Jack. "As soon as a prisoner is made, these villains write to the people who will pay for their lives and state that upon the receipt of the money the prisoner will be landed in Calcutta in India, from whence they can communicate with their relatives. That is the only guarantee of good faith, and has to be accepted or the prisoner is sacrificed.

"Now, native vessels make annual trips to Calcutta towards the end of the southwest monsoon, and carry the prisoners there under guard disguised as blacks. They do not sight land until Jagannath, and carry cocoanuts, dried bonito fish, tortoise shell and cowrie shells. They return with the northeast monsoon in December, by which time the brigands' agent disposes of his prisoners and gets his ransom money. The boats bringing back cargoes of rice, cotton oils and sundries."

"It's a rough, hunglin', long-winded way, an' I should think as ther agent'd think he'd git arrested instid o' gittin' 'em."

"To provide against that," replied Jack, "the brigands

stipulate in their letters that upon the least sign of treachery toward their agents, the prisoners will be killed ere they are produced. In India it is an easy matter to carry out this threat. Moreover, the prisoners are not produced until long after the agent is gone with the money. Thus far they have never been know to fail."

"Knowin' as Raymond is arter his father as Black Ben does, won't be be apt ter take steps ter guard hisself wi' his prisoners?" asked Tim, astutely.

"No doubt of it," Jack replied, with a troubled look, "for once he finds us attacking him, he can kill the prisoners if we fail to leave him alone."

"Ha' ye formed any course ter foller now?"

"Yes. We must return to the cavern, and sink the boat, find the outlet into the sea by which we drifted into the place, and then make our way over to the brigands' isle. We can then penetrate the central lagoon, under water, and I'll give the brigands a chance to surrender. If they fail to obey I will go under water again, stand out to sea beyond range of their guns, and bombard the island until I force them into obedience."

"Then heave ahead, my hearty, an' we'll return ter ther boat."

Jack and the old sailor started to descend the minaret, when, to their astonishment, they saw that a large number of natives had emanated from the mosque, where they had been at their devotions, and seeing the two, had surrounded the base of the pyramid.

Every one of them were armed with knives and revolvers, and the crowd bristled with these weapons, pointing the firearms at the two friends in a threatening manner.

"We are caught in a trap!" muttered Jack, desperately.

"Good Lor'! They're a-goin' ter fire at us, too!" groaned Tim.

The minaret was an open structure.

Our friends had instinctively drawn their weapons to defend themselves, but now saw that there was no hope for themselves, for there was not the least protection for their bodies visible.

"If we fire down at them," said Jack, "we may get away with ten of them. Fifty are opposed to us. Forty will remain to avenge their companions. We would be riddled with bullets."

"Yer ain't a-goin' ter give in, are yer, lad?"

"There is no alternative."

"Holy gee—they'll kill us."

"No, they won't. They'll make prisoners of us."

"Then they'll take us afore Black Ben, an' he'll kill us!"

"Perhaps, if he has returned, for he knows we are here to capture him."

Their position was utterly hopeless.

If their friends only knew what became of them, there would be some expectation of a rescue, but how were they to learn what was befalling them?

Up to this moment, the natives had made no noise, but now that they were seen, they burst into a terrific yell, and a chorus of excited voices began to jabber in their native tongue.

Jack listened to them intently.

Then he shouted in Portuguese:

"Silence! I wish to speak to yon!"

Several of the Maldives understood him and obeyed, but the rest, ignorant of what he meant, kept on shouting.

The ones who understood Jack yelled at them, and after considerable difficulty, restored something like order.

Then one of them called to Jack in bad Portuguese:

"What have you to say?"

"Cause those men to lower their weapons."

"Not until you are in our hands."

"Do you intend to make prisoners of us?"

"We do. If you discharge a shot your doom is sealed!"

Jack translated what was said to Tim.

It made the old sailor feel pretty blue.

"I s'pose thar's no help fer it but ter give in," said he.

"The easiest way is the best," replied Jack. "As you see, a fight means our inevitable destruction. By surrendering, we stand a show to be saved. Which shall it be?"

"Yield."

"That settles it."

They went down, but just as they reached the base of the coral pyramid, Raymond appeared in the cavern opening.

"Caught!" he cried.

"They are going to take us to the armed island! Save us!" cried Jack.

He had no time to say any more then, for several of the natives made a rush for Raymond, and he dashed back to the cave and escaped them by getting aboard the boat.

Jack and Tim were surrounded.

Upon disarming them, the natives bound the two, and while some remained to penetrate the cavern in pursuit of Raymond, the rest carried the prisoners to the water's edge.

There they embarked in several canoes, and carried their prisoners over to the stronghold of the brigands.

CHAPTER XII.

A GUN BATTLE.

RAYMOND had followed Jack and Tim out of curiosity, and upon seeing what had befallen his friends, he had been driven back into the crypt by the natives.

Fritz was on the Simoon's deck when he came flying down the ledge and joined the Dutch boy.

"They're captured!" he shouted.

"Who?" gasped Fritz, with a start of alarm. "Shack und Dim?"

"Both. The brigands are carrying them to the next isle."

"Donner und Blitzen!"

"We must get out of here and save them."

"Shiminey Christmas! Here coom some ouf der' nickers!"

A number of the Maldives who had been coming down the ledge now appeared, and Raymond drew a revolver.

He fired several shots at the natives, each shot creating a loud report, which was drowned in the cries of the islanders.

They retreated faster than they came.

"Off with the boat before they return!" cried Raymond, excitedly.

"Led 'em coom beck," replied the pugnacious fat boy. "I don't vant me someding besser as to haf a fight mit 'em!"

"While we waste time here our friends are getting deeper into trouble."

"Dot vas so. Ve sink de poat und got oud ouf dot."

Hastening inside, they prepared the boat for a descent.

She was soon ready, and Raymond explained to Fritz all that had befallen Jack and Tim up on the land.

When he had finished, he said:

"At the time the boat drifted into this cavern, she was only submerged thirty-two feet. If you return her to that depth, you will be sure to find the opening by which she got in here."

"Fer sura; I vas tink me ouf dot too," assented Fritz.

He then opened the valves and let the boat go down one atmosphere before he stopped her.

Then he drove her around the cavern submerged.

Keeping her close to the wall, he maintained a lookout, and presently saw a rugged opening in the coral.

She passed through it into the sea, and running some distance away from the isle, she was sent to the surface.

The island under which they had just been was close to her, and she ran around it towards the brigands' stronghold.

Just as they came in sight of it, the men who had captured Jack and Tim reached its shore at a point where a flight of stairs had been cut in the coral leading to the water's edge.

They were then debarking with the prisoners.

Stopping the boat, bow on to the isle, Fritz rushed down into the gun-room and loaded the big weapon.

Depressing the breach, he discharged the gun.

A shot whistled through the air, and landed on the isle amid the jungle, where it burst with an appalling report.

It was a surprise to the brigands.

A wild yell pealed from the throats of every one on the island as the shot tore a great hole in the ground and sent an enormous cloud of debris flying skyward.

The men who had captured Jack and Tim paused in affright, for the shot had fallen just ahead of where they were about to proceed with their prisoners.

Fritz sent out a second shot.

It landed and exploded nearer to Jack's captors.

Another cry escaped them.

Scrambling back into the canoes they paddled hastily away.

To the disgust of Fritz he saw that they had left their prisoners behind them with one or two men on the island.

Scores of the brigands were rushing from all parts of the isle toward the spot where the projectiles had exploded, and many of them manned the sea wall battery.

Fritz had planned to force the men into their canoes with the prisoners so that he could swoop down upon them and rescue Jack and Tim on the water.

He dared not fire again for fear of hurting his friends, although he was aching to drop a shot among the brigands who were then surrounding the two.

Loading the gun for the third time, he sent a shot flying after the retreating canoes, and as it burst among them several of the boats and their savage inmates were blown to pieces.

The rest escaped around the island.

Long before this the people on the isle had seen where the destructive shots came from, and the gunners began to ram home charges in their advance.

Raymond observed their dangerous actions from the pilot-house, and then shouted down the 'phone:

"Come up here, Fritz; they're going to fire at us."

"Vait! I gief dose bedderies a few shotses."

"Can I assist you?"

"Run der poat avay vun hundred yards more."

Starting the Simoon, the ship-owner headed her back toward the burial isle, the brigands mistaking this move for a retreat and sign of fear.

They now began to discharge their guns at the electric side-wheeler, and ball after ball came flying over the water toward her as the guns roared on.

Around she then spun, untouched as yet, and Fritz aimed the pneumatic gun to bear on the guns to the right of where he saw the prisoners being carried inland.

Then he fired it.

A detonation like thunder shook the sea.

Where the shot struck several guns had been standing surrounded by a number of the natives.

But after the explosion nothing remained but a huge indentation in the coast, as tons of the coral rock had been blown to pieces, and, mingling with the fragments of the demolished guns and human beings, all was hurled high in the air.

The cries from the brigands that greeted this awful shot plainly bespoke the mingled horror and amazement with which they were inspired by the gun.

There was something so appalling about that weapon that they were terrified as they never were before.

A grim, exultant smile crossed Fritz's face when he saw with what effect the projectile had burst.

He then lost no time in reloading the piece.

Now he aimed it to the left, and pressed the button.

Away screamed the cylinder of destruction, just as a round came from the gun that Fritz aimed at.

The cannon balls hummed around the Simoon, some ripping up the water, others scraping her sides, grating her wheel box, and flying clear over her.

No serious damage was yet done to her, as there was a

heavy swell on the water, moving her so that the inexperienced gunners could not get a true aim.

When the last shot Fritz fired had landed, the scene of the first one was repeated with more disastrous effect.

This kind of warfare was more than the natives could withstand.

They fled.

Before their panic got the best of them, however, a newcomer appeared.

It was Black Ben.

By his encouraging cries he rallied his forces.

Then he got the remaining guns in operation.

A fierce and determined fusillade began.

The balls now came flying so dangerously close to the Simoon that Fritz yelled up to his companion:

"Sink der boat!"

Raymond lost no time in following this wholesome advice, and the boat went under just in time to escape destruction.

Down she went, and a wild cheer pealed from the brigands, as they were under the erroneous impression that they had sunk her with their shots.

Fritz then went up to the pilot-house.

"Bully fer us," he laughed. "Ve ditn'd got hitted bad vanct."

"We've had a narrow escape, though," replied Raymond.

"How far down you dit trop us?"

"Seventy feet."

"Dot's too much. Raise her fefty."

"What do you intend to do now?"

"I seen a lagoon by der mittle of der isle, und ve go in dere."

"Has it got a passage for entrance?"

"Yah, a bick canal."

"Then you take the wheel."

"If vonct ve got inter der poats vot vos angored by dot lagoon I plow me dem all by pieces alretty, so dem son-auf-a-sea-gooks don't could got avay from dere till ve gaptures dem."

Fritz resumed charge of the Simoon.

She was raised to within twenty feet of the surface, and Fritz steered her around the island until she reached the canal.

To his disgust, he saw that the entrance was barricaded by gates that descended so deep as to bar their passage.

A shot from the gun shattered them, however.

Then forging into the canal, the electric boat ran up toward the center lagoon.

She soon reached it, and glancing up, the fat boy saw the floating hulls of the brigands' fleet overhead.

The Dutch boy then proceeded to make his arrangements for blowing these vessels out of the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIGGING THEIR OWN GRAVES.

SEVERAL of the natives had seized upon Jack and Tim and hurried them away toward the center of the isle.

They followed one of the well-beaten paths that ran through the jungle, and soon came in sight of the village which surrounded the central lagoon.

Scores of the people were rushing along uttering loud shouts, and among them came Black Ben and his friends.

No sooner did his glance fall upon the prisoners when he and his four friends paused.

"Jack Wright a captive!" he shouted, delightedly.

"This is luck," added one of the white men.

"Kill the lubbers!" cried another.

"Hold on! Can't you hear those shots?" growled the brigand chief.

"It must be his boat attacking the island."

"Then these fellows will prove to be grand hostages."

"What shall we do with them?" asked one of the natives.

"Chain them to the posts with the other prisoners."

"Very well."

"Where did you capture them?"

The man explained.

Meantime the shots continued.

"So, they were in the crypt. Ha! More shots!"

"The gunners are scared an' rushin' this way," said one of the men.

"Heavens, what a gun that boat has! I must go, or they'll scatter the natives and gain the island!"

He said something to the captors of our friends in their native tongue, and then, followed by his friends, he rushed away at full speed toward the scene of action.

Left alone with the natives again, the young inventor and his companion were hurried forward.

High fences surrounded each of the houses, and the two prisoners were taken to the gate of one of them.

It was guarded by a gigantic negro, who was armed with a lance, and a weapon hanging from his girdle with a bunch of keys that looked like a raw-hide cat-o'-nine-tails with leaden bullets fastened on the end of each lash.

The prisoners were put into his hands with some instructions, and as the rest went away, he said in good English, with a decidedly Southern dialect:

"Come on, dar! Yo's got ter stop heah awhile!"

"Ah! You speak English?" cried Jack, in surprise.

"Ob co'se I does. I'se a Kentucky niggab what went ter sea, an' gittin' wrecked heah, done jine de brigan's. D'want no foolin' from yo' neider, or I'se gwine ter beat yer ter deff!"

There was a brutal look about this giant which showed Jack plainly that he was a tyrannical beast in sympathy with no one but his masters.

The boy and the sailor glanced around.

They saw that they were in a huge yard attached to the largest house in the village.

It was surrounded by a high fence made of palm tree trunks, and the ground was of bare, hard coral.

In the middle of this yard there was a row of stakes planted in the ground, to each of which a white prisoner was secured, a band of metal encircling their waists, to which a short, heavy chain was fastened.

The other ends of the chains were secured to the posts.

Each one of the ten prisoners was armed with a pick and shovel, with which they were industriously working away, making long, narrow excavations in front of them and never looking up.

They were all white, half of them respectable-looking men and the rest white women and girls.

These people were all passengers of vessels that had fallen into the hands of the brigands.

The crews of the vessels, unanched like convicts in chain gangs, were employed as slaves, drudging in various parts of the island at different vocations.

Jack glanced at them in amazement.

An indignant look crossed his face, and turning to the big negro, he asked in tones of pity:

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Dey all am held fo' ransom," the negro replied.

"What are they doing?"

"Duggin' dar own graves."

"Great heavens! What for?"

"Ter lie in if dey ain't ransomed."

"This is cruel—cowardly—unnatural—"

"Shut up, dar!"

"But I say—"

"It's agin de rules fo' ter talk beah."

"I am going—"

"Shut up I tolle yer!" yelled the burly negro, furiously, as he drew the cat. "Yo' want me fo' ter slay de skin often yo'?"

"Horrible!" gasped Jack.

The negro dealt him a stinging blow over the face for daring to speak, the lashes and pellets drawing Jack's blood.

An exclamation of pain escaped him.

"You black coward!" he exclaimed, indignantly.

"Stop!" hissed the negro.

He dealt Jack another agonizing blow.
It was maddening.

Had not the youth been bound he would have resented it.
"Fer ther Lord's sake, Jack, keep still or that swab'll kill yer, lad!" groaned Tim, glaring at the giant furiously.

For his pains Tim received a blow, but he bore the pain in silence, for he realized that they were utterly at the mercy of this cruel fiend.

To speak was only to invite renewed torture.

Jack wisely kept still after that.

A grin, so diabolical that Jack shuddered, overspread the face of the demoniacal negro.

"Now mebbe yo' gwine ter 'bey me!" he remarked.

Then he dragged them over to two of the posts that were not occupied, padlocked each one to a post like the other prisoners and cut their bonds.

He then procured a pick and shovel for each of them.

Handing Jack his, he pointed at the ground and said:

"Dig! Yo' got ter do like de res'. If yo' stop, or speak, or doan' do what I done tole yo', I'se gwine ter beat yo'!"

Jack took the shovel.

As quick as a flash he raised it, and dealt the brute a blow on the head with all his might.

He fell senseless, and lay like a log, a groan pealing from his thick lips.

"That's for treating me like a beast!" exclaimed Jack.

A cry of alarm escaped the other prisoners.

"You'll get killed for that, rash youth!" said a voice beside Jack.

He glanced at the speaker.

This individual was the prisoner next to him.

He was a venerable man, in tattered clothing, which once had been the finest of broadcloth.

Tall and thin, he had a hollow, pallid face, covered with an unkempt beard as white as the hair on his head.

"Death is preferable to his cruelty," replied Jack.

"You are right," said the old man, with a sad sigh.

"Have you and the rest been here long?"

"I was the last comer. This is my fifth grave."

"Your fifth grave?"

"I have dug five since I've been here. I'll fill the sixth."

"Do you have to dig a new grave as soon as one is finished?"

"Yes. Black Ben keeps us toiling from morning till night in this broiling sun in order to keep us too broken spirited to revolt."

"The scoundrel! Were you wrecked on these islands?"

"No. My ship, the Sea Sprite, was captured by the brigands—"

"The Sea Sprite, did you say?"

"Yes—that's the name of my ship!"

"Then you are Roger Raymond, the New York ship-owner?"

"I am," assented the old gentleman with a surprised look.

"How did you know?"

"Because your son Robert is with my crew to save you."

A glad cry escaped the old man and tears sprang to his eyes.

Jack then detailed to all hands how he happened to be there.

Every one was filled with unutterable joy at the prospect of deliverance.

The firing now stopped.

Jack seized the senseless negro and took his keys away from him.

Unlocking his own bonds he liberated Tim, and they then set the rest of the prisoners free.

"We must escape from here!" cried the young inventor, thrillingly; "if you will all follow me I'll lead you to freedom!"

They had no weapons, but the indomitable courage of this youth electrified them, and raised their own flagging spirits.

Headed by Jack they dashed over to the gate.

"My boat is in the offing. Once we board her we are safe!" cried Jack. "Now, forward, to attract the attention of our friends!"

He flung open the gate and they rushed out.

But as they ran from the yard they found themselves confronted by a large crowd of the natives with Black Ben at their head.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTURING AN ISLAND.

FRITZ and his companion brought the Simoon to a pause under the flotilla of native vessels lying in the lagoon.

The Dutch boy figured that if these vessels were destroyed, a retreat of the brigands from the coral isle would be cut off.

All the rascals would then be at their mercy, for the Simoon could stand off at sea and bombard the island, until Black Ben released his prisoners to save his own life.

Fritz felt confident that neither Jack or Tim would be killed, for they were such important prisoners, in view of the fact that the electric boat was menacing the island, that it would not have been good policy to destroy their lives.

With this argument in his mind, the Dutch boy went down into the store-room, and seeing the parrot and monkey sky-larking in there, he drove them out, and put on a diving suit.

Giving Raymond some instructions, he next slung a bag over his shoulder, into which he deposited a number of bombs, and a coil of insulated copper wire.

This done, Fritz passed back into the water chamber, filled it, and passed out on the Simoon's deck.

He started the electric lamp on his helmet, and proceeding up forward where Raymond could see him from the wheel-house, he gestured to him.

Obedient to this sign, the ship-owner raised the Simoon under the out-rigger vessels, and as she glided from one to the other, Fritz affixed a bomb to each one.

On each of these bombs there was a short, sharp spike, by which they were held to the boats' hulls, while on the opposite side they each were provided with a short binding post.

The Dutch boy strung a wire from one bomb to the other, by fastening on to these binding posts, and when he had them all joined in one series, he brought the two ends of the wire to a binding post on the deck-house.

A second signal was made to Raymond, who thereupon backed the Simoon away until she was fifty yards distant from the flotilla.

She then paused.

The wires had drawn taut.

Fritz gestured up to Raymond again.

He turned a switch in the pilot-house.

It sent a current of electricity into the wires.

The result was a general explosion of the bombs.

They were all loaded with Jack's powerful high explosive. An awful concussion followed, which shook the sea to its very bottom, and in the space of one minute not a vestige of one of those vessels remained upon the circular lagoon!

"Pully fer me!" chuckled Fritz.

He went into the water chamber, closed the door, and started the pump.

The water was emptied out and he passed into the boat, opened his visor, took off his diving suit and joined Raymond.

"They are gone!" exclaimed the ship-owner.

"I don't vas seen vun ouf dem floatin' abose."

"Shall I send her up?"

"Yah; und ouf dere vos vun left, ve boust id to bieees!"

Out went the water ballast, and up rose the Simoon.

Not one of the vessels remained, but the lagoon was littered with floating planks and torn sails.

The explosion had caused every one in the houses that surrounded the lagoon to look down from windows and roofs.

They saw the rise of the boat.

Fritz opened one of the windows.

He had caught sight of one of the white men who had been with Black Ben on board of the Simoon as prisoner.

This fellow stood on top of one of the houses.

"Hey!" Fritz yelled at him.

"Well?" snarled the brigand.

"You vos seen us plo' de poats ub?"

"May the arch fiend fly away with you for doing it!"

"Unless you sed Shack Wright und Dim Dopstays free I vill bust dot islands all by bieces," said Fritz.

"If you don't veer off we'll kill your friends."

"Dot vill make id vorser for you, 'cause ve don't vould stob den till ve shooed eferypody by dot islands."

"Try it!" was the defiant reply.

"Den vatch dot house you vas on."

And so saying Fritz dove down into the gun-room.

A volley of rifle shots pealed out from the houses as he left the window, and Raymond hastily closed the shutters to protect the panes of glass.

The leaden pellets fell harmlessly upon the aluminum hull.

Fritz loaded the gun, aimed it at the house from which the white man had disappeared, and fired.

An appalling roar followed.

The house was smashed to pieces, and its masonry being driven back with the force of a battery of artillery, tore a great breach half way across the island.

A wild clamor followed from the natives.

Hastily reloading the gun with a heavier projectile and depressing the breech, Fritz dropped a shot into the island on the other side of the houses.

So great was the force of this explosion that a cloud of sand and broken coral flew up in the air and encompassed the isle like a fog.

The wind soon carried it away, however.

Before another shot could be fired a man appeared in one of the openings between the houses, waving a flag of truce.

He was Black Ben.

Fritz went up on deck.

"Ahoy!" he shouted.

"A truce!" replied the brigand.

"Vos iss?"

"Stop firing!"

"You surrenther?"

"We cannot do that."

"Den vot you want?"

"Jack Wright has escaped."

"Vos dot so? Where he vent?"

"I do not know. We haven't got him."

"Den I keep on firin' until dot ve got him."

"No, no! Don't be unjust."

"Surrenther dot island, den."

"I will speak to my men about it."

"I gief you fife minute."

"That will do!"

Black Ben then disappeared.

All the rest had vanished ere he appeared.

Fritz waited, and Raymond opened the window.

At the expiration of five minutes the ship-owner shouted:

"Time's up, Fritz!"

"Gief de ratskal a leedle more dime."

A deep silence ensued.

Still no one appeared.

"Ten minnites!" called Raymond.

"Och! Vot's keebin' 'em?" growled Fritz.

He waited a few minnites longer.

Then he became suspicious.

"Raymond!" he cried. "Run oud by der sea."

"Are you going to bombard the island?"

"Fer sure!"

Raymond started the boat off.

She soon passed out the canal.

But no sooner did she reach deep water, when Raymond

cried:

"By thunder, they're escaping!"

"Vot!" roared Fritz, with a start.

"Look across the island!"

"Shiminey Christmas!"

A fleet of out-rigger boats met their view.

Attracted by the firing, they came from an adjacent isle.

The intervention of the houses surrounding the lagoon had prevented Fritz and his companion seeing them.

All the bandits had embarked and sailed away.

The island was deserted by the rascals.

Black Ben had very cleverly deceived them with his flag of truce to gain time for his men to embark and escape.

By the time Fritz saw the fleet they were a league from the island, running to the southward toward North Nilandu atoll.

Whether they meant to stop there, at Kolumandulu, or go for the One and a Half Degree Channel near the equator, Fritz did not know.

Moreover, he was puzzled to know whether Jack and Tim were yet in the power of the miscreants.

It was evident, however, that the fearful gun on the Simoon had struck terror to the souls of the brigands, causing them to be thus driven from their formidable stronghold.

"Ve vin de isle!" he exclaimed.

"It's a barren victory without our friends."

"Yah, but now ve can chase dem poats und capture dem."

"Hold on! See there! People on the island yet!"

A crowd of men had gathered on the shore, and were wildly signaling to the crew of the Simoon.

"Dey must be some ouf de bandit's prisoners," said Fritz, as he glanced at them. "Let der poats go, und ve rescue dese beobles."

Raymond nodded approvingly and sent the boat in shoreward.

CHAPTER XV.

A LUCKY FIND.

JACK and his companions had been very much startled by the appearance of the brigand chief and his followers outside the gate when they started to leave the yard.

"The prisoners are escaping!" yelled Black Ben.

"Back with you!" cried Jack, to his companions.

A rush was made by the Maldives, but before they could reach the gate Jack had crowded his companions back into the yard and slammed the gate shut.

It was furnished with two stout bars, and it only took the young inventor a moment to shove them into the sockets.

Nothing short of a powerful machine could have broken down that gate now, for it had been built to hold prisoners.

Moreover, the fence having been made of palm tree trunks was too high to be easily scaled, so that none of their enemies could get in at them under any circumstance in a hurry.

A sigh of relief escaped Jack.

"Safe!" he exclaimed.

"Gee whiz! Hear 'em yell outside!" chuckled Tim.

"But we can't get away from here," said old Mr. Raymond.

"They can't reach us anyhow," said Jack.

Just then a cry of fear escaped another of the prisoners.

Jack glanced around.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"The giant negro!" faltered the man. "He's running amuck!"

The big fellow had recovered from the stunning blow Jack dealt him, and having risen to his feet and grasped his lance, with all his fury roused when he saw the prisoners free, he charged on them.

There was a murderous look upon his black face, as he poised his keen lance to run it through the first one he met.

Jack sprang toward him like a cat.

"Help me!" he cried.

The big darky saw him and uttered a wild yell.

Without the least hesitation, as the negro rushed toward him, Jack dashed straight at the big fellow.

Every one thought for a moment that the plucky fellow designed to struggle unarmed with his gigantic foe.

In this they were slightly mistaken, however.

Jack sped ahead several paces, and gauging his distance at a glance, he suddenly hurled himself down at the darky's feet.

Before the coon realized what had happened, he tripped over Jack's body and pitched forward.

Never losing his wits for a moment despite the kick he got in the side from the negro's bare feet, Jack grasped one of the black man's legs as he fell and clung to it.

That insured his falling.

Down he went to the ground with a bang.

It made him see stars, and ere he could recover himself, Tim tore the lance from his hand and pressing the keen point into the rascal's neck, he growled:

"If yer moves a inch yer a goner!"

"Fo' de Lawd, I'se a dead man!" groaned the black. Jack bounded to his feet.

He was delighted over the success of his plan.

"Help me to bind him to the posts?" he cried.

Every one of the women had drawn aside in a terrified group, but the five men eagerly pounced upon the big rascal and dragged him over to the posts.

Having the keys, Jack fastened two of the metal bands around the keeper of the prison yard, chaining him fast.

He was then utterly helpless.

"Safe again!" gasped Mr. Raymond, with a deep-drawn sigh. "This youth is a marvel of courage."

"He won't trouble us any more now," laughed Jack.

"Lord save us, he might a-opened ther gate an' let in ther crew outside," said Tim, wiping the great beads of perspiration off that for a moment had gathered upon his rugged brow. "It makes me think o' ther time I wuz aboard o' ther ole frigate Wabash in the navy. You see, we had a rebel prisoner aboard o' our craft, an' we wuz a-sailin' quiet as a mouse towards a lagoon whar a enemy's ship wuz hid to take her by surprise. The wind died out an' left us becalmed jist outside the lagoon—"

"How unfortunate," said Mr. Raymond.

"Ay, now, an' ter make matters wuss, our prisoner escaped in a boat wot waz a-towin' astarn, an' rowed like blazes fer ther lagoon ter warn his friends o' our comin'—"

"Dreadful! I suppose you lost your prey?"

"We would, only fer me. I knowed as that 'ere lubber'd have ter be stopped afore he reached ther lagoon, so wot d'yer s'pose I done, when every one else wuz cast down wi' despair?"

"I haven't the remotest idea."

"Waal, sir, I ups an' chimb ter ther werry top o' ther mainmast, an' spruug fer him! It wuz a pretty high jump, I'll allow, but ye knows yerself how far a feller'll fetch jumpin' from a great height. Down I dove, an' dash my top-lights, sir, if I didn't land plumb on top o' that boat, so well did I reckon ther distance."

"Remarkable!"

"Ay, now, it wuz. Ther boat wnz upset, an' I grabbed ther lubber, an' afore ye could say 'Jack Robinson' I'd swum back ter their ship wi' him, got him aboard, an' we caught the enemy's ship."

And with a triumphant gleam in his solitary eye, Tim took a chew of plug, firmly believing that he had actually done as he said, gave a hitch at his pants, and chuckled.

Not a soul in the crowd believed him.

But they were too polite to say so.

Instead, they told Tim he was a dandy, and left him in a very happy mood to think he figured as a hero in their estimation.

"As there is no earthly good of our remaining here," said Jack, when the old liar finished his yarn, "suppose we go into that house, and see what our chances are of escaping

through it into the central lagoon by one of the windows."

"This is Black Ben's residence," said Mr. Raymond.

"So much the better! Ha—here comes a shot!"

They heard the crash as Fritz blew the fleet up in the lagoon.

It scared every one except Jack and Tim, for they recognized the sound as that of the young inventor's high explosive.

They saw the debris of the boats fly up into the air.

"The Simoon is in the lagoon!" said Jack.

"Ay, an' thar goes ther brigands' vessels," replied Tim.

"Into the house with you all!" cried Jack. "If any of that debris comes down on our heads we'll get killed."

They all rushed through a door into a room.

The stone house was magnificently furnished with goods stolen from the ships Black Ben had captured.

A few moments after they got inside Fritz had blown the adjacent house to pieces, and then fired the shot over the buildings upon the island.

Jack located the place these shots came from.

"Fritz is bombarding the town!" the youth exclaimed.

"An' not knowin' as we are in here," added Tim, uneasily, "he may open fire on this 'ere buildin' an' kill us."

"Then it isn't safe here," said Mr. Raymond.

"Is there a cellar under the building?" queried Jack.

"I've heard Black Ben say there was."

"Then find it. We must not remain here. It would be far safer down in the cellar," said Jack.

They scattered to find it.

Tim soon discovered a flight of stairs, and they followed him down into a deep vault cut far below the tide line, which, singularly enough, was not flooded.

The reason of this was because the cellar was lined and floored with massive masonry.

To Jack's delight he found a lantern, and as Tim had a match they soon had a dim light.

It showed them that the cellar was stored with many boxes, barrels, cases, kegs, crates and packages containing a vast treasure of valuable goods stolen from the victims of these sea brigands.

Catching sight of a door at one side of the cellar, Jack and Tim left the rest sitting on the boxes talking over their hopes, and going up to the door, they pushed it open.

A small vault was revealed.

It contained a smelting furnace, and half a dozen kegs standing in a row against the wall.

With his curiosity aroused over this peculiar find, Jack picked up an iron bar.

With this implement he burst in the head of one of the kegs.

As the light fell upon the contents of the receptacle the youth and his companion uttered a cry of amazement.

The keg was filled with gold.

It was in molded lumps the shape of a small crucible.

"A treasure!" said the astonished young inventor.

"Ay, ay, my lad, and worth a big fortune, too!"

"Now I understand the case. All the gold Black Ben got by his robberies he melted in crucibles in that furnace, and these lumps are made up of jewelry, plate, and everything of gold that fell into the brigand's hands."

"Shiver my top-lights, but ther lubber wuz a fool!" chuckled Tim, "for thar he's heen amassin' a large fortune fer a long time only fer us ter come along and scoop it in! Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER XVI.

REUNITED FRIENDS.

As the Simoon drew up to the steep shore of the brigands' island, Fritz and Raymond observed that the men who were signaling to them were mostly all attired in the garb of sailors.

"Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!" they shouted.

"We will pick you up!" replied Raymond, cheerily.

There were half a dozen in the group, all of whom were chained together.

As the boat broached up to the shore, Fritz and his companion hastened out on deck and assisted the men to get aboard of the Simoon.

Loud exclamations of delight escaped them.

"Saved from a fate worse than death!" one of them exclaimed.

"Who are you, anyway?" queried Raymond, curiously.

"All who are left of the English brig King Harry."

"Have you been prisoners here long?"

"Nearly a year—absolute slaves."

"Are there any more left on the isle?"

"Over a score."

"Could you find them and bring them here?"

"Easily, sir."

"Tell me—is there one—an old man—named Raymond here?"

"Yes. I saw him yesterday, chained to a post in Black Ben's yard."

"Thank God! My poor father yet lives!"

"I see you have driven the brigands away."

"Do any of them remain on the island?"

"Not one," replied the chained sailor.

"But haven't they carried any of the prisoners away?"

"They barely had time to escape themselves, let alone taking prisoners."

"In that case we can rescue all the people they enslaved."

"All who yet live. This climate is very unhealthy for strangers. Every one who stays here long enough is attacked by violent fevers and a disease called *beri-beri*, which is a dangerous dropsical illness."

"I cut me dem irons off ouf you," said Fritz at this juncture. "Den you could help derudder fellers to got apoard ouf dis vessels."

Procuring a fine saw from the store-room, the Dutch boy cut the bonds of the wretched, ragged prisoners, who thereupon scattered over the island and brought back the rest.

The shackles were cut from these, and a general rejoicing ensued among them over their deliverance.

Among them were the crew of the packet ship which had gone to Ceylon, and Fritz told them where their craft was to be found.

As soon as every one was free the Dutch boy called for volunteers to destroy the brigands' guns.

Every one of them was eager to help.

Leaving Raymond in charge of the Simoon, and taking some implements, Fritz went ashore with all the men he had saved, and they made a circuit of the isle.

Every one of the guns at the sea wall battery were hurled into the water, where they disappeared forever.

Having dismantled the fortification, the Dutch boy said:

"Now we go und searches for mine friends."

"The likeliest place to look would be at the houses," said one of the men.

"You know yourself someding apoud dem houses?"

"I've been in several."

"Den lead der vay mit me alretty."

The whole crowd started for the village.

Most of the yard gates stood wide open and they rushed in and scoured house after house, shouting for Jack, and observing that not a soul remained of the brigand's gang.

Everything had been left intact in the houses.

It was very evident that their occupants had made a rapid flight, never waiting for valuables or anything else, so great was their anxiety to get away from the Simoon's *island*.

Twenty-five houses at a time were thus gone through, in a short time every one of them, save Black Ben's *island*, was thoroughly searched.

The yard of this house was the only one that had its gate *island* laid locked, and this fact aroused Fritz's suspicions.

He sent one of the men to the Simoon for a rope.

When it was procured Fritz tied an end of the rope to his

arm, and causing the men to form a human pyramid against the high fence he climbed up their bodies and reached the top of the fence.

Looking over into the yard he saw the chained negro giant glaring up at him, and then fastened his rope to one of the tree trunks.

He then slid down into the yard and unbarred the gate.

The crowd swarmed in.

"Dere vos a nicker!" said Fritz, pointing at the captive black.

"Why—he was the gateman here!" said one of the sailors.

"Vos dot so?"

"Ay, he guarded the prisoners."

"Vat prisoners?"

"The ones Black Ben chained to those posts."

"Vhy dey done dot alretty?"

"To hold them for ransom."

"Den vhy dot nicker vos shained oop vunst?"

"Maybe he will tell you himself."

Fritz strode over to the big fellow.

Surveying him curiously a moment, he asked:

"Vhere der prisoners vos vot vos shained here mit you?"

"G'way dar—g'way dar!" sullenly replied the ugly wretch.

"Don't you vos dell me dot?"

"No, sah! Ain't gwine ter say nuffin'."

Fritz picked up the coon's long, keen lance.

Prodding him in the stomach with it, the fat boy made him yell.

"If you don'd spoke mit me, I make a bin-cushion by your pody!"

"Lawd amassy! Stop dat! Lemme alone! Yo' heah?"

"Donner vetter! vill you told me vot I wanted to know?"

"Oh! Yas, sah—yas, sah! Stop stickin' me. I done tell yo'?"

Fritz had begun to jab him again.

The coon danced, howled, and recoiled.

He could not move far though, on account of the shortness of his chain.

"Oud mit id!" roared Fritz.

"Dey gwine in de house!" howled the darky.

"Who you mean by dot?"

"All de prisoners."

"Vos vun ouf dem a sailor mit a game leg?"

"Dunno nuffin' about dat."

"Coom on—ve see who dey vos."

And leaving the furious negro scowling at them, the whole party proceeded to the house and began to call for Jack.

Their voices were heard, and led by the young inventor, all the people in the cellar came thronging eagerly up.

"Fritz!"

"Shack—Dim!"

And with these cries of recognition the three friends shook hands.

Every one began to talk, the ladies wept, and for awhile a regular pandemonium of excited voices prevailed.

Fritz and Jack exchanged stories.

"So the brigands are gone and the isle is ours?" asked the delighted youth.

"Fer sure. Und you say dot you vos found a dreasure?"

"Yes—six kegs filled with gold."

"Shminey Christmas! Vot luck!"

"Come! Let us return to the Simoon. I am eager to chase the brigands."

"Go ahead, my lad," said Tim, "an' I'll bring up the rear wi' some o' these men a-carryin' ther kags o' gold to ther boat."

With this arrangement the whole party marched out.

Ten of the men carried the gold from the vault in the cellar.

Headed by, Fritz, they all made their way back to the shore.

The Simoon had gone away.

But they soon saw her.

Raymond had sighted a ship a league away, and sent the

boat flying after it, as he saw that she carried the American flag.

It was a large, full-rigged ship, and he counted on inducing her captain to take charge of the rescued sailors and carry them to port.

When his object was explained the captain readily agreed, and the Simumon piloted her back to the shore, where the crowd was waiting.

As soon as the side-wheel boat came to a pause and Raymond came ashore, he met his father, and an affecting scene took place.

The gold was stored aboard of the Simumon.

Presently the ship hove up and her captain landed.

He held a long conference with Jack, telling the young inventor that he was bound for Ceylon, and thence across the Pacific to San Francisco.

He agreed to carry the crew of the packet ship to Ceylon, so that they could regain their vessel, and said he would take the rest, and the brigands' plunder to the United States.

This arrangement just suited Jack.

Accordingly, Black Ben's cellar was emptied, the goods it contained were stowed away aboard the ship, and the rescued men boarded her.

Raymond's father wanted to remain with Jack, but he was persuaded to go with the rest, as he was not a well man.

Then the grateful crowd took leave of our friends.

The ship put out to sea and sailed away.

"We have done well so far," said Jack, when the four were left alone. "But there is lots of work ahead for us yet."

"Are you going to pursue the brigands now?" asked Raymond.

"Yes; they doubtless will remain organized, and settle on one of the other group of isles, expecting to return here to recover their valuables."

"Shiminey! Von't dey got left!" grinned Fritz.

"Then come aboard, my lads, an' we'll give chase to 'em!" said Tim.

Once on the Simumon again, our friends started her off in the direction Black Ben's boats had taken.

CHAPTER XVII.

SEARCHING FOR THE FUGITIVES.

THE night had begun to set in dark and dismal by the time the Simumon glided out in the middle of the channel that ran between the great chain of coral isles.

A strong wind sprang up, raising a nasty chop sea, and as absolutely nothing could be done that night, and only the utmost vigilance could prevent the boat making leeway that might dash her upon a submerged coral reef, Jack sunk her.

"We will be out of the influence of the weather down here," he told his companions, as he brought the boat to a pause in a depth of forty fathoms near the bottom.

"Deu ve goimence oberations to-morrow?" queried Fritz.

"A day more or less will make little difference, since we intend to scour all the coral isles lying to the southward in search of our men," the youth replied. "They can't escape us."

"I oxpected dot ve vould haf dem all by our mercy by dot island when I plow me np der fleet," growled Fritz. "But it seem dot dey vos hat nder vessels dot vasn'd der at der dime, und dey coom along und carry de ratskals avay vunct."

"I'll keer fer ther boat whiles yer has yer mess, Jack," said Tim.

The fat boy had prepared supper.

Jack went down below with the rest and sat down to the table.

Lest alone in the pilot-house with his monkey, Tim picked Whiskers up in his arms and began to pet him.

He had a great affection for the beast, and had taught it many tricks, which he now proceeded to make Whiskers perform.

In the midst of his fun, the monkey suddenly fell to the floor, and Tim's wooden leg accidentally came down on its tail.

A howl of agony escaped Whiskers.

He glared at Tim a moment and then leaped on his shoulders.

"Good Lor'!" groaned Tim, feelingly. "Have I hurt ye? Poor lubber! I didn't mean ter do it. There—there—I'm awfully sorry."

The monkey chattered and bared his teeth.

"Don't blubber," said Tim, sympathetically. "There's a good monkey. Gosh, wot a sweet disposition he's got! A regular ring-tailed angel. I must a near killed him, an' he's as forgivin' as—oh—ouch!"

"Wow!" howled Whiskers.

He grabbed Tim's beard with both paws.

Then he began to pull with all his might.

"Leggo!" yelled Tim, wildly.

"Wow!" chattered the monkey.

Then he yanked Tim's lilacs until the old fellow thought the side of his face was coming out.

"Gol durn ye fer a cussed little beast!" roared Tim, as he puckered up his face into a horrible grimace. "Leggo, I tell ye, or by thunder I'll knock ther figger-head offen yer huil."

He grabbed the monkey and tried to pull him away, but Whiskers had a grip like a porous plaster, and stuck fast to him with such dogged perseverance that every time Tim pulled to get him away, he nearly tore out his whiskers by the roots."

Attracted by the monkey's howls the parrot now came in.

Upon seeing Whiskers, the bird flew up on top of the agonized Tim's head, and caught the monkey by the ear with its sharp beak.

Disengaging one of its paws, Whiskers punched the bird.

Then a scuffle ensued on top of Tim's head, the parrot's claws scratching the old sailor's bald head, the monkey's toes gouging him in the ear, eyes, nose and mouth, and rendered him furious.

Driven to desperation, it suddenly occurred to Tim to butt his head against the wall to dislodge the fighting pair.

"Dash yer toplights!" he yelled. "I'll smash ther everlastin' stusslin's out o' ye both! Take that!"

And bunk went his head.

Unluckily for Tim's design, the monkey and parrot dropped to the floor ere they were hit, and the old sailor's head went in such violent contact with the wall that he saw stars.

"Fire an' brimstone!" he roared, rubbing his cocoanut. "Jumpin' Jerusalem! wot a sockdolager! Now, blast yer timbers, I'll——"

What he intended doing is not quite certain.

But when he prepared to do it the monkey and parrot were gone.

Tim stumped around the room, swearing to himself until he cooled off, and then consoled himself with a chew of plug.

He peered out the window for a moment, and then observed a mere tragic scene transpiring some distance away.

It was a battle between a shark and a saw-fish.

The man-eater had come flying through the liquid depths in pursuit of the saw-fish, causing it to turn at bay directly in front of the boat, where the search-light fell on it.

On came the shark, when, like a gunshot, the fish dove straight toward it, its great saw ran over the back of the shark, and a hideous gash was cut in the cannibal of the deep.

This wound so frightened the shark that it fled.

Remaining stationary, and scarcely moving its tail or fins, the saw-fish waited for the return of its enemy.

It was not long kept in suspense.

From a direction different than that where it vanished came the wounded shark with a fierce rush.

Over it turned upon its back, its enormous mouth open

wide, and just as the saw-fish darted away the shark's teeth closed on its body and tore out a big chunk.

The water became dyed crimson with the blood from both of the wounded combatants.

Then they went at each other furiously.

All thought of running away left them.

They cut and tore each other, until their bodies were a mass of hideous wounds.

Each attack rendered them weaker and weaker, until at last it became apparent that the battle soon must end.

At this juncture a large number of huge, shadowy figures began to make their appearance in the surrounding water.

Tim soon distinguished that they were a school of sharks, like a horde of vampires they hovered around the combatants, each moment drawing nearer and nearer to them.

Then all at once they sped forward.

In a moment they reached the marine gladiators.

Without the slightest hesitation they opened their great jaws, and closing them upon the fighters, tore them to pieces.

It made Tim shudder.

Before the life had fairly left the bodies of these giants of the deep, they had fairly been ripped to pieces and devoured.

Leaving them fighting over the remains Tim went below.

"I'm a-goin' ter shoot a school o' sharks," he remarked to his friends as he passed through the cabin.

Going down into the gun-room he peered out a port hole.

The battle was going on among the sharks for possession of the bodies of their prey.

Rapidly loading the gun, Tim aimed it at the largest sea cannibal in the middle of the school and fired.

The projectile burst upon the first impact.

A terrific disturbance of the water followed.

As soon as it subsided, the old sailor observed that not one of the sharks or other fish which surrounded them lived, for the water was strewn with their scattered remains.

"That settles 'em!" grimly muttered Tim. "They've eaten their messmate an' now ther little fishes kin eat them."

He returned to the wheel-house.

Here Fritz relieved him so he could get his supper.

The watch was finally divided, and the night passed away.

After breakfast on the following day the boat was sent up to the surface where it was raining.

The atoll, or group of little islands of North Nilandu, lay a few miles to the southward, and the Simoon was headed for it.

When she reached the group she was steered around each individual island, and Jack stood in the bow, clad in a suit of oil-skin, and armed with a spy-glass, keenly surveying them.

There were a few native villages on them.

"Couldn't the brigands be among those people?" queried Raymond.

"No. I am sure they ain't," emphatically replied Jack.

"Why are you so positive?"

"You remember they sailed away in big boats?"

"Of course I do."

"Do you see anything here but canoes?"

"No."

"Then they ain't here."

It seemed probable that the brigands would be where their boats were.

The natives were not disturbed.

The Simoon's great wheels carried her further southward. Late in the afternoon she reached Kolumandulu, and the search was begun again, but with no better success.

By high fall the storm cleared away, the stars appeared, and a refreshing breeze kept the heat away, for they were then within two degrees of the equator.

The Simoon crossed the Vei Mandu Channel.

Far off to the eastward lay the Haddummatti Isles, but they were not of a nature that would favor settlement.

"We'd better cross the One and a Half Degree Channel, and go to Suvadiva—the most southerly big collection of

Jack, "and if the brigands ain't there, our course

will be up among the eastward groups. Head for the Equatorial Channel, Fritz."

"Yah," replied the fat boy, who was then at the wheel.

But just then Tim sung out:

"Sail ho—sail ho!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

USING A DECOY.

OVER a league away to the south-eastward there appeared the white sails of a noble ship heading for the equator.

Jack gained a good view of her with his glass, and saw that she was a merchant ship of large proportions, probably laden with a valuable cargo.

The sight of this craft gave him a very shrewd idea, and turning to his companions, he said:

"That vessel is heading in exactly the same direction we are about to follow, and by daybreak will reach Suvadiva."

"Vot ouf dot?" asked Fritz, curiously.

"We can use her for a stool-pigeon."

"How you mean by dot?"

"If the brigands are upon those isles and sight the ship, I haven't the least doubt but what they will make a desperate effort to rob her."

"I tink so neider."

"Now suppose we reduce our speed to accord with that at which the ship is going, and submerge the Simoon until her deck is flush with the sea. That will partly disguise our approach. We can ther follow on close behind her. If the brigands are on the Suvadiva Isles, we can be close at hand to pounce upon them the moment they attack her."

Every one heartily approved of this plan.

"The matter has been reduced to its simplest form now," said Raymond. "These brigands form a gang independent of the rest of the people on these isles. They are not in league with the sultan but form a separate colony, and he probably protects them in a measure for a bounty which they must pay him through his *Atolu-veri*. Consequently we have no one to fight save this gang alone."

"Keel haul me if they ain't pretty well wrecked now," laughed Tim.

"Ve make 'em sicker before ve vos got troo mit 'em, Dim," said Fritz, as he reduced the boat's speed and sunk her until her deck was even with the surface of the sea.

The Simoon was kept at the distance of a league astern of the ship, and no lights were shown.

Jack took the wheel, and supper was prepared.

As soon as Fritz relieved the young inventor, he went down below and examined the electric machine.

It only needed lubrication.

The gas engine was going, working the dynamo, and Jack tested the accumulator jars and recharged them.

Assured then that everything was in good working order, he went up to the cabin again, where he found Tim and Raymond talking about the gold in the kegs.

"If that 'ere lot is made up from ther spoils wot them brigands captured from ther vessels wot they've robbed," the old sailor was saying, "thar ain't no tellin' who ther owners of it is, and ther gold must go beggin' fer a owner."

"I don't agree with you, Tim," replied Jack, as he entered.

"Why don't yer, my lad?"

"Because the gold belongs to our employers."

"Your employers?" echoed Raymond, querulously.

"The Ship-owners Association of New York."

"How do you make that out?"

"Because it was recovered while I was working for them."

"That does not agree with my notion."

"Have you formed an opinion about it?"

"I have. We did not employ you to gather treasure. All we asked and agreed was for you to wipe the brigands out of existence. Your Letter of Marque, empowering you to legally act for the government, demands that you give the

government all ships and treasure found on them which you capture in battle or as enemies."

"There were none."

"Very true. The stipulation does not confine itself by any technicality to treasure procured from a stronghold of an enemy in this case. Hence, the gold is yours."

"Let me examine my papers," said Jack.

He took them from a locker.

Reading them through, he soon found that they were worded in such a way that there was no legal claim to be based by either the association or government for the gold.

It therefore was Jack's.

He was surprised.

"You are right, Raymond," said he.

"Then you see if we end this matter in safety to ourselves, you will not only gain the two rewards, amounting to \$100,000, but the contents of those kegs will net you double that amount."

"This will certainly be [a prosperous voyage," laughed Jack.

"Lor'! this ain't nuthin' ter a v'yage as I once went on, when we foun' a island o' gold," replied Tim.

"Fritz," interposed Jack, hastily, "did you call me?"

"Nein," replied the Dutch boy, innocently, from the wheel-house.

"Yes, you did. I heard you. You want me, I'm sure."

"No, I ton't, Shack."

"Something is broken. I heard it snap up there."

"But I dell yer—"

"You'd better let me see for myself," interposed Jack.

And foreseeing that Tim had himself charged and primed to fire off one of his yarns, Jack escaped.

Raymond was not so fortunate.

Tim grabbed him.

"Say," remarked he, "didn't you never hear about that golden island?"

"I can't say I ever did," reluctantly replied Raymond, not daring to tear himself away, for fear of offending the old sailor.

"Then I'll tell yer about it," said the old sailor, in satisfied tones. "Yer see, ther ole frigate Wabash wuz caught in a gale off one o' ther Samoa Islan's, an' afore we knowed it she wuz run aground. We had ter dig a canal ter git her afloat again, when wot should we turn up but shovelful arter shovelful o' pure vargin gold! Come ter find out, ther hull island wuz nuthin' but gold, only covered with a layer o' sand."

"Wasn't that rather queer?" asked Raymond.

"Ay, but we couldn't account fer it no way. At any rate, as soon as we got her afloat, we began to fill her with the gold. Everything we didn't need wuz hove overboard ter make room fer ther gold. Fust we filled ther hold. Then, when that was chock full, we stowed it atween decks. When that wuz full, we filled her gun-deck till it flowed from ther ports an' we had ter close 'em. Then we stacked her spar-decks, an'—"

"Literally stuffed her full of gold, eh?"

"Ay, ay, tons of it. Thar must a been ten million."

"Well, what happened next?"

"Why, we sot sail fer port ter sell it. On ther second day—"

"What burden was the Wabash?"

"Two thousan' tons."

"And she carried ten million?"

Tim paused in confusion.

He realized that he had been piling it on too thick.

Raymond burst out laughing at him.

"You'd better take a reef or two in that yarn, Tim," he laughed. "So much gold as all that might have sunk your old frigate so deep that you couldn't raise her to squeeze any more stories out at her expense."

"I reckon as I've made a leetle mistake," said Tim.

"I think so myself."

"Now if yer will le' me explain—"

"No explanations are necessary, Tim. The fact was you were all so avaricious that you overloaded your frigate and she sunk. Every one but you were drowned—"

"Avast thar, Mr. Raymond—"

"Don't interrupt me," laughed the ship-owner. "I'll concede that your imagination is as flexible as a piece of rubber, but we had better make a composite story of it. I'll finish it. When you all went down a whale came along and swallowed you like Jonah. You got off one of you stories inside of him, and he threw you up on a desert island, feeling sick at his stomach. Then he died, and you lived on his meat until a passing ship picked you up, and carried you back to the navy yard, where you—"

But Tim had enough.

He saw that Raymond was poking fun at him.

And to avoid any further discussion of the discrepancies in his yarn, he discreetly fled.

The night wore away.

Our friends easily kept track of the ship ahead all night, as the speed of the half-submerged boat had been slackened to agree with that at which the vessel was traveling.

Just at the dawn of day every one was awakened by Tim.

"All hands aloft! Turn out! Turn out!" he cried.

Startled, they all rushed up to the pilot-house.

Jack was the first one there.

"What's the matter?" he asked, breathlessly.

"See fer yerself, my lad—the brigands!"

Tim pointed out the window.

Three miles athwart their course lay the Suvadiva Islands, close to which the big ship was running.

A fleet of half a dozen of the Maldivian out-rigger boats had shot out from among them, manned by a large number of men, and were bearing down on the ship.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ADVANTAGE OF CELLULOSE.

By the use of a powerful spy-glass, Jack soon distinguished that four of the brigands' boats were commanded by the white men whom he had heretofore noted as the leaders of the Maldives.

He also witnessed the fact that their boats were now armed with guns, that were being put in operation against the merchant ship.

"They are the brigands, and no mistake!" he exclaimed.

"Then they have made Suvadiva their new headquarters," said Raymond.

"Ay, and they have commenced firing on the merchant ship."

"We have arrived only just in good season, then."

"Tim, go down and man the gun."

"Ay, ay, lad."

"Fritz, we must approach them under water."

"Shiminey! Dot vos a goot blan," assented the Dutch boy.

"They won't know but what they've got their dastardly game all in their own hands then," said Jack, "and we needn't dispel this illusion until we rise in their midst and go for them."

Boom! boom! came several reports across the water.

The brigands had opened fire on the ship.

She had suddenly hauled to.

Then she came about and attempted to run away, while her crew opened fire from her decks with small arms on the brigands.

Jack took control of the Simoon.

He sunk her until the top of her pilot-house was buried, and then putting on all her available electro-motive force, he sent her flying toward the scene of the combat.

She made about twenty miles an hour in this situation, and in less than fifteen minutes she reached the spot where the fight was going on.

Jack soon saw the hulls of the Maldives' boats gliding about in the water all around him.

Starting the pump, he emptied out the ballast.

Then the Simoon arose.

She bounded to the surface in the very midst of Black Ben's fleet, and a veritable howl of alarm pealed from the natives and their white captains when they saw her so unexpectedly appear.

They scattered their boats right and left.

Away they fled in all directions.

The attack on the merchant ship was abandoned.

"We have startled them!" laughed Jack.

"And no wonder!" grimly commented Raymond.

"I'm ready fer 'em, Jack!" came Tim's voice in the telephone.

"Then single them out one by one and fire!" replied Jack.

The crew of the merchant ship had been as much astonished as the rest were over the sudden appearance of the Simoon.

Jack had hardly spoken when Tim fired the gun.

A fiendish howl emanated from the flying projectile and it struck the nearest out-rigger boat and burst.

One shot was quite enough to demolish it, and a few of her crew were left alive swimming in the water.

None of their friends on the other boats dared to pause long enough to pick them up, and they were soon drowned.

By this time the desperate rascals on the other boats had somewhat recovered from their shock of surprise.

They had several guns loaded to fire upon the big merchant ship, but now directed them at the Simoon.

Three reports rang out from their vessels.

One of the cannon balls flew over the Simoon, the second razed her stern and the last one bit her.

There came a terrific shock.

The ball penetrated the outer hull of Jack's boat, as it was shot at close range with a heavy caliber gun from the vessel upon which Black Ben was.

A hole was torn in the Simoon's side.

The inner shell was not penetrated, however.

As soon as the water rushed into the fissure, it swelled the cellulose which was worked along in the wake of the water-line, causing it to choke up the hole.

Consequently, no water could penetrate, and the boat could not sink, as it actually repaired itself.

"They've struck us!" exclaimed Jack, with a frown.

"Any danger of going down?" nervously asked Raymond.

"I doubt if the cellulose worked properly."

"How can we find out?"

"Run down and see."

Raymond left the pilot-house and Tim fired again.

The second shot struck the next nearest vessel.

She, too, was blown to fragments.

Horrified by the complete destruction this appalling gun wrought, the crews of the four remaining vessels now fled for the coral islands as fast as they could go.

Upon seeing Jack put them to flight, the crew of the merchant ship uttered a wild cheer.

Leaning over the bulwarks and up in the rigging of their craft, they were eagerly watching the result of Jack's work.

They could not be of any use to him, as they had no weapons, except their small arms, and could not then use them as the brigands were out of range.

Jack sent the Simoon in pursuit of the boats.

Again the gun poured out its shot.

This time Tim missed.

striking one of the coral isles on the other side of the vessel, the projectile tore it to pieces and sent up a vast cloud of dust hundreds of feet in the air.

"Make allowance for the swell of the sea, Tim!" Jack called down to the old salt.

"All right, my hearty. Better luck next time!"

Several more shots came back from the fugitive vessels another one struck the hull of the Simoon.

It glanced along the side, as it came at an angle, and

without doing any more damage than to scrape her badly, it finally fell harmlessly into the sea.

There was a stiff wind blowing, and the natives' boats made rapid headway in among the islands.

Jack pulled the power lever all the way over, to add speed and overhaul the fugitives.

At the same juncture Tim fired.

The recoil of the gun snapped the lever-pin in Jack's hand, and just as it broke, the jerk drove the lever backward.

Instead of increasing the boat's speed, she was stopped.

Moreover, there was no way to start her until a new pin was put into the lever, in place of the broken one.

The shot flew toward one of the vessels and hit her.

In less than a moment she was gone.

Only three of the vessels now remained, and they were forging rapidly ahead around an outlying barrier reef.

A cry of dismay escaped Jack.

Just then Raymond came in.

"The ball did not penetrate her inner shell," said he.

"Good! But we are in trouble now," said Jack.

"What have you stopped the boat for?"

"An accident did it," and Jack explained the situation.

"Can you repair the damage?" queried Raymond.

"Yes, but it will occupy some time."

"How unfortunate that it should happen just at the moment when we least wanted it to occur."

"That's generally the way such things occur. You remain here until I get some tools to fix it."

"And there go the three vessels out of range behind the island!"

Leaving the ship owner in the pilot-house, Jack hastened down into the store-room and procured the necessary implements.

He then returned to the pilot-house where he found Fritz speaking to the crew of the nearby merchant ship.

"Dit dey vos done you some tamages?" he was asking.

"Wounded several of my men," was the reply.

"Den you don't vant some helb?"

"No; we can get along all right. Who are they?"

"Der prigands ouf der goral isles."

"And your craft?"

"A submarine boat, workin' for der shib owners ouf New York."

"I see. Is there anything we can do to aid you?"

"Not a ting. You vos pedder go on apoud your beesness."

"We are grateful for what you have done."

"Vould you gief your ifidenze to der audorities?"

"Willingly, as soon as we reach London."

Some further conversation ensued, and then the big vessel proceeded on her way.

Jack had set to work upon the broken pin and soon got it repaired, while Raymond kept a watch upon the actions of the flying brigands.

"There!" said the youth at last. "It's done."

"Der inerchants ship vos gone," announced Fritz.

"And the three remaining vessels of the brigands are several miles away, winding in among the coral isles," said Raymond, pointing off to the southwest.

"They are leading us into a dangerous place," said Jack, as he started the Simoon off, "for I can see that the water is dotted by spots that plainly indicate the presence of many sunken reefs that threaten us with wreckage. We must proceed slowly and with caution, boys!"

And the Simoon started in pursuit of their enemies.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

THE young inventor had made no mistake in calculating that his enemies were leading him into a dangerous place.

Raymond and Fritz went out on deck and kept a keen watch upon the water for danger, and by their directions Jack steered his boat to avoid the sunken reefs.

Along crept the Simoon at a snail's pace compared with the speed at which she was accustomed to run.

The brigands were perfectly familiar with the channels among these isles, and therefore proceeded without the least hesitation.

Jack noticed that they were working their way toward the largest isle, situated in the middle of the group, and presently saw their boats pass through the reef inlet.

When they reached the island, the whole crowd debarked and left their vessels fastened up to the shore.

There they disappeared in the dense foliage.

It was lucky for Jack that he exercised the most extreme caution in advancing, for there were no end to the sunken reefs besetting their course.

By the time the Simoon arrived within half a mile of the island he brought her to a pause.

"Vot for you vos stobbin', Shack?" called Fritz, looking around.

"Because I'm going to bombard the island from here. There is no use in getting any nearer than this."

"Shall I open fire on 'em, my lad?" Tim shouted up the telephone as he heard what the youth said.

"Yes! Drop half a dozen shots on the land. We'll soon root them out of their covert that way and force an issue."

But these words had scarcely left the young man's lips when a battery of artillery, hidden among the vegetation of the island, was fired at the boat.

Every one was startled.

They did not expect it.

A rain of cannon balls came flying toward the boat.

Some of them fell short, others passed over her, and another one struck her on the bow close to the water line.

It failed to penetrate, however, as the force of the shot was expended before it struck the Simoon.

"Jernusalem!" exclaimed Jack, in astonishment.

"They've got this island fortified too!" cried Raymond.

"Donner und blitzen! Ve got shot if ve shtay oud here!" said Fritz. "I tink ve pedder go in alretty."

"By all means," assented Jack. "They will load up and soon discharge another battery at us. Hurry up!"

"To remain here is madness!" said Raymond.

"I'll sink the boat and maneuver her under water," said Jack. "They won't be able to locate us then."

Fritz and his companion hastened inside just as Tim fired the first shot at the island.

They did not wait to see what effect it had, for Jack at once submerged the boat and drove her over to the outlying reef under water.

Here she crept along the coral formation until she came to the inlet, where Jack brought her to a pause.

"Tim, are you ready?" he called down to the old sailor.

"Ay, ay, lad! Raise her up," came the reply.

"Just as soon as you fire I'll sink her again."

"Wot for?"

"To keep behind the protection of the reef."

"So thar shots can't reach us?"

"That's the idea, exactly."

"An' a good plan it is."

Jack raised the boat to the surface.

Then Tim discharged the gun.

As soon as the shot sped away, down went the boat again.

In this manner half a dozen shots were planted on the island without our friends exposing themselves to any danger.

Battery after battery was fired back by the brigands, but as they could not locate the Simoon, and the barrier reef fended off every ball that came anywhere near her, she was not injured.

It was now impossible for the brigands to get away from the island in their boats, as the electric boat was planted in the only outlet there was from the lagoon.

The morning wore away, as this singular style of warfare went on at intervals, and each time the boat arose Jack saw

that the island was rapidly becoming demolished by the terrible shots Tim was dropping upon it.

The young inventor could not help admiring the dogged courage of his enemies in withstanding him so long, and resolved to destroy every one unless they surrendered.

At exactly noon time the Simoon arose to send a last shot, when Jack saw the brigands on the shore.

They held a flag of truce.

He saw that their numbers were sadly diminished.

"Hold on, Tim!" he shouted.

"They wants ter parley, I see."

"It's a surrender as sure as fate."

"An' it's high time as they did give in."

Jack kept the boat on the surface and ran into the lagoon. Here he sunk her in eight fathoms of water, and ran her over to the island before he brought her up again.

She arose to the place where the brigands stood, and Jack flung open a window, and shouted to Black Ben:

"Is this another swindling flag of truce?"

"No, no! We give in! Have mercy upon us!"

"Why didn't you submit in the first place?"

"We dreaded capture."

"Naturally enough."

"Two thirds of my men are gone."

"I see they are greatly reduced."

"My three white leaders are killed."

"It's a pity you wasn't among them."

"Jack Wright, I've run my race. I submit."

"How many men are with you?"

"Just one hundred natives."

"Then come aboard one at a time."

"Very well. I will surrender first. It is hard. I would have held out until you killed me, but my men insisted, so I gave in."

He was wounded and dejected.

Tim, Fritz and Raymond prepared to receive the prisoners, and as soon as Black Ben came aboard, they seized him and shackled him.

Then the rest came aboard one by one.

As fast as they appeared they were manacled and stowed away in the after water chamber.

Every one of them were thus made prisoners, and Black Ben declared that there were no more.

That settled the matter.

The brigands of the coral isles were wiped out of existence.

"Our work is done!" said Jack, triumphantly.

"And nobly, too!" assented Raymond.

"Den we start for home alretty," said Fritz.

"When I wuz in ther navy—" began Tim.

But Fritz grabbed his old accordion and choked him off before he could spring the yarn on them, Whiskers and Bismark chiming in with their howls and yells.

It was then decided to land the prisoners in Ceylon and put them in the hands of the British government for punishment.

Accordingly the Simoon was sent flying away from the Maldivian islands, and in due time reached her destination.

The crew of the packet ship had already apprised the authorities there of what had happened, and when Jack turned his prisoners over to the legal authorities, he received their warmest thanks.

The Simoon remained at Ceylon for some time.

Before she went away Black Ben and his gang were tried for their crimes and received the extreme penalty of the law.

The electric boat was then started for home.

A rough trip followed, but they weathered it, and in due time returned to Wrightstown without mishap.

Here Robert Raymond reluctantly parted with Jack and his friends and returned to New York, where his father had preceded him.

The government had confiscated the valuables Jack sent to San Francisco, but no demand was made for the keys of gold, so that this treasure fell to Jack.

It was sold, and the large sum realized was equally divided among the three friends.

Besides this, our friends had Raymond's reward and the reward of the Ship-Owners' Association for wiping out the brigands to divide among themselves.

They were therefore well paid for their services.

The monkey and parrot were returned to the house, and the Simoon was dissected and stored away.

Jack had made up his mind to devote the use of some of the money he won to building another boat.

The idea of this vessel had occurred to his inventive mind while he was fighting the brigands, and was destined to be a wonder.

Our readers will soon read about his strange adventures with this marvel, as we have a narrative about it in preparation, and as this tale is concluded we will draw the curtain.

[THE END.]

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